

Syria warns of chemicals against Israel

CAIRO (Agencies) — Syria will retaliate with chemical weapons if Israel ever uses nuclear weapons, Syria's ambassador to Egypt, Issa Darwish, told the government weekly Al-Ahram on Wednesday. "The response will be severe if Israel goes further in its threats to strike Syria with nuclear weapons," Mr. Darwish was quoted as saying by Al-Ahram. "Damascus will respond by using chemical weapons and Syria is now preparing to face up to any Israeli threat," the newspaper reported him as saying. Israeli officials said this month that Syria was producing chemical weapons with help from Russia. Israel is believed to have at least 200 nuclear warheads, although the Jewish state has not admitted to having them.

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'UAE shipped heavy weapons to Bosnia'

LONDON (AP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has shipped a consignment of heavy weapons to Bosnia, Jane's defence weekly reported. Quoting informed sources, the magazine said the UAE shipment includes 30 105-millimetre Howitzers of an unknown make which have already arrived, and 36 French-built tanks which are to follow. The ship carrying the artillery guns is believed to still be in the harbour at place, a southern Croatian port some 115 kilometres southwest of the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, Jane's said. The United States is leading a \$700 million programme to train and equip the Muslim-Croat Federation army so it will be on a par with the Bosnian Serb army. The UAE is one of several Islamic countries — including Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Kuwait — which are contributing to the programme. Western officials say a key aim of the programme is a desire to keep Iran out of the region.

Outgoing Iranian envoy honoured

AMMAN (Petra) — On behalf of His Majesty King Hussein, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Khaled Maalouh Wednesday conferred upon the outgoing Iranian ambassador to Jordan, Ahmad Dastmaljan, the Independence Medal of the First Order.

Bahrain will not attend GCC summit

MANAMA (AFP) — Bahrain said Wednesday it would boycott a Gulf Arab summit in Qatar next month amid a border dispute between the two countries and Doha's support for Manama's political opposition. Bahrain's foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammad bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, said his country will stay away from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit because "of several non-brotherly and non-amiable activities" Qatar has undertaken against Bahrain.

NATO to renew mandate in Bosnia

BRUSSELS (AFP) — North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) ambassadors on Wednesday agreed that the post-implementation peacekeeping force (IFOR) in Bosnia should be committed to the region until mid-1998, as the United States proposed, a NATO official said. "Everyone has agreed to plan on the basis of an 18-month mandate," the official said. The mandate of the current 60,000-strong IFOR expires on Dec. 20. It will be replaced by a stabilisation force of about 31,000 men.

Israel satisfied with Lebanon truce panel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel voiced satisfaction on Wednesday with the international ceasefire monitoring committee set up in South Lebanon after Israel's offensive in April against Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas. "In our eyes, the committee amply justifies its creation," the coordinator for Israeli activities in South Lebanon, Uri Lubrani, told AFP. Mr. Lubrani said he hoped the committee set up six months ago would "continue to do its work with the same seriousness and success."

Ghali sole candidate for Africa — Musa

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt on Wednesday stressed that Boutros Ghali, who is seeking a second term, was Africa's only candidate in the race. "There is only one candidate for Africa and he is Mr. Boutros Ghali," Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa told reporters. Mr. Musa, who said consultations were still underway at the U.N. Security Council, was replying to a journalist who asked him if the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) had another candidate.

Egyptian minister dies

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's Minister of Health Mohamed Abdel Hadi Radi died Wednesday after a long battle against a severe illness, the official news agency MENA reported. Radi, 59, was hospitalised near Cairo airport on Monday upon his return from France where he attended a conference on water. Doctors said he was suffering from a serious anaemia and general fatigue.

U.N. panel adopts pricing mechanism for Iraqi oil exports

Movement is fast for implementing deal; Anbari expects oil flow to start Dec. 10

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — A U.N. committee on Wednesday approved a formula for setting the price of Iraqi oil, a major political hurdle standing in the way of the final go-ahead allowing Baghdad to resume oil exports for the first time in six years.

Also Wednesday, the U.N. staff submitted an interim report to the Security Council outlining procedures for exports and distribution of food and medicine purchased with oil revenues.

Both steps signalled the United Nations was moving forward rapidly to implement the plan under which Iraq can sell \$2 billion worth of oil for an initial 180-day period to buy food and medicine for its people suffering the effects of international sanctions. An Iraqi negotiator said his country was set to resume oil exports on Dec. 10, initially at the rate of 500,000 barrels a day, following the U.N. green light for the oil-for-food deal. "As soon as contracts

have been signed with oil companies, we will begin exporting, which should all happen by Dec. 10 at the latest," negotiator Abdul Amir Al Anbari said in Paris. Baghdad will export "about a half million barrels per day, if oil prices stay at their current high level," he said. "Everything will depend on the price of crude and quantities on the market."

UAE pushes for Gulf Arab normalisation with Iraq, page 7

exporting \$2 billion worth of oil every six months, in order to buy food and medicine to help its sanctions-hit people.

Under the terms of the resolution, the oil-for-food deal comes into force the day after U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali informs the U.N. Security Council that all preparations have been completed. Iraq will sign contracts with France's Total, as well as British and U.S. oil firms, said Mr. Anbari.

The United Nations banned Iraqi exports as part of an economic embargo imposed after Baghdad invaded Kuwait in 1990. The measures devastated Iraq's oil-based economy.

Last May, Iraq accepted a U.N. offer allowing for limited oil sales under international supervision. But the plan was never implemented because of technical issues, differences with Iraq over interpretation and Baghdad's military incursion into protected Kurdish areas of the

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Israel drops demand for written guarantee for 'hot pursuit'; Arafat insists on dates for further moves

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Negotiators made some progress on a Hebron accord Wednesday after Israel dropped a demand for written guarantees that its troops will be allowed to chase suspects into Palestinian-controlled areas of the city.

However, Yasser Arafat is not yet ready to sign an agreement, said Ahmad Tibi, an adviser to the Palestinian leader.

Arafat wants a written promise from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israeli troops will withdraw from most West Bank rural areas over the next year, with timetables attached to the pullback stages, Mr. Tibi told the Associated Press.

The key sticking point in two months of negotiations has been Israel's demand that its troops be allowed to operate in the neighbourhoods that are to come under Palestinian control if they consider it necessary in order to prevent attacks on Israelis. Mr. Netanyahu aide David Bar-Ilan said Wednesday that Israel has dropped its initial demand for a written guarantee on the freedom of movement for troops in Hebron.

Instead, Israel agrees that the same terms on troop movements will apply to Hebron as in the West Bank and Gaza areas under full Palestinian control, Mr. Bar-Ilan said. "We can apply what exists in the Oslo agreements in reference to other areas where Israel has the right to go on," Mr. Bar-Ilan said, referring to the autonomy accords already signed.

The autonomy accords are vague on when Israeli troops have the right to enter so-

called "a" areas that are under full Palestinian control.

In the past, there have been several such incidents, including when Palestinians fired at Israeli troops at an outpost in the Gaza Strip and the soldiers chased the assailants into the "a" area.

In general, Israeli soldiers have been careful not to enter Palestinian areas, even when they knew that a suspect in an attack on Israelis has sought refuge there.

Mr. Tibi said Wednesday that Palestinian forces were firm that Israeli troops not be allowed to reenter areas of Hebron from which they have already withdrawn.

"No Israeli soldiers will be allowed to enter liberated Palestinian areas," Mr. Tibi said. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators also remained at odds Wednesday over the fate of downtown Shuhada street, which links several of the settler enclaves. The street was closed to Palestinian motorists after the 1994 massacre of 29 Muslim worshippers by a Jewish settler in Hebron.

Palestinians demand that the street be reopened immediately after Israeli troops redeploy. "We will not agree on an agreement which does not open the Shuhada street, which is a life line for Hebron," Mr. Tibi said. Israel has said the street should remain closed for security reasons.

Despite the remaining difficulties, Mr. Netanyahu was optimistic and has asked Education Minister Zevulun Hammer to postpone a trip abroad so he could be present for a cabinet vote on the emerging agreement, the Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot said.

Israeli abuse of Palestinians widespread — Ben-Yair

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Misreatment of Palestinians by Israeli border policemen is widespread, according to a report by attorney general Michael Ben-Yair published Wednesday by the newspaper Yediot Aharonot.

"This is a phenomenon and not something extraordinary," Mr. Ben-Yair said. "This phenomenon damages our moral integrity in the eyes of the world... and we must do everything possible to stamp it out."

Publication of the summary came a week after Israeli television broadcast a 45-minute video showing two border policemen repeatedly kicking, slapping and abusing six Palestinian labourers caught trying to enter the Jerusalem area from Ramallah without permits.

A Jerusalem court on Tuesday ordered the conditional release of the two border policemen, David Ben Abu, 20, and Tzahi Shmaya, 19, who have been charged with aggravated assault and abuse of power.

The court ordered the defendants released on \$2,800 bail and placed under house arrest until their trial. No date for the

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Development of Jordan Valley is a priority, Regent tells area's residents

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Wednesday visited the Dammia and Dahr Al Ramel districts in the central Jordan Valley region where he addressed the Abbad tribes about the development projects underway in their region.

Thanks to these projects and others carried out so far, the central Jordan Valley has been transformed into a booming area, attracting residents and more investments, the Regent told a public rally.

The major schemes to be implemented in the Jordan Rift Valley, including water projects, the Regent said, will cost \$3 billion. He stressed that Jordan gives due priority to water resources and water use in the valley.

The government seeks to carry out development projects in all regions without any discrimination, said Prince Hassan, who urged the local authorities to adopt cropping systems suitable for producing high quality products.

He said efforts should be made to solve problems



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Wednesday greets a local resident during a visit he paid to the central Jordan Valley (Petra photo)

facing agricultural production and marketing of produce, pointing out that Jordan is receiving assistance from the European Union and other parties to develop farming.

Referring to the development of the Balqa region which includes the central Jordan Valley, Prince Hassan cited the planned Balqa Applied University and private colleges in the region

as marking the educational development there. With reference to the problem of Palestinian refugees, some of whose camps are in Balqa Governorate, the Regent expressed hope that there would be no reduction of services to the camps. Jordan's delegation to next month's meeting of donor nations will stress that reduction will cause

serious concern to Jordan, he said. The Regent paid tribute to the Jordanian Armed Forces for their role in the overall development of the country, especially in land reclamation.

Deputies representing Balqa Governorate and local officials attended the rally, during which notable delivered addresses pledging allegiance to the Hashemite Throne.

House finalises reply to King's speech; Ammarin's resignation is unaddressed

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament met on Wednesday to discuss and finalise items related to the opening of its last ordinary session but failed to discuss a thorny issue in its agenda: the resignation of Karak Deputy Nazeem Ammarin.

Deputies discussed and endorsed the House's reply to the Speech from the Throne, approved the formation of the House's 14 committees (see page 12) and started preparations for the Arab-European parliamentary conference that is expected to be held here on Saturday.

However, there was no time left after the four-hour long session for debating the issue of Dr. Ammarin, who had submitted his resignation in protest of the government's handling of the unrest in his city last August.

Dr. Ammarin presented his resignation to the House following the riots in the south after the government's decision to lift bread subsidy. Dr. Ammarin cited at the time "verbal threats" from

Prime Minister Abdul Karim Khabul as the reason behind his resignation, insisting that his resignation was not personal.

Several weeks after his resignation, the National Action Front bloc, which groups 19 deputies at the House, announced it was accepting Dr. Ammarin's resignation and will approve it at the House.

It was yet not clear whether the House's majority would accept the deputy's resignation. But the House witnessed all morning Wednesday continuous talks and mediation among parliamentarians.

Deputies Taher Masri, Suleiman Sa'ad, Fawzi Tueimeh and others were seen talking to Deputy Ammarin, who, by the end of the session looked extremely worn out. If the resignation was accepted by the House, it will be considered as a precedent. And by-elections will be held in Karak within 45 days of the House announcement.

Deputy Ammarin told the Jordan Times it was up to the House to decide on the issue since it was too late for him to withdraw. He said he will defend himself if his resignation came under discussion.

Deputies' discussions of the House's reply to the Speech from the Throne, which will be read by Speaker Sa'ad Hayel Sour before His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Saturday, concentrated at the outset on the phrasing of certain clauses in the reply but took a different turn later when the issue of separation between the legislative and executive powers was brought up. In his speech from the throne at the opening of Parliament last week, His Majesty King Hussein called for an in-depth study of the introduction of the "Norwegian law" that disallows deputies from holding ministerial portfolios.

Leftist Deputy Toujan Faisal claimed that such a change necessitates an amendment in the Constitution. An argument that was outrightly countered by cen-

trist Deputy Abdul Rousef Rawabdeh who noted that the Constitution "allows and does not enforce" prime ministers to include deputies in their cabinets. There is no need for amending the Constitution nor is the time ripe for opening discussions on the subject," he said. "In the final analysis, the government has the final say."

But Islamic Action Front (IAF) Deputy Bassam Emoush insisted on raising the issue in the House's reply. The discussion came to an end when speaker Sour said: "The issue is not up for discussion. It is up to the prime minister to decide whether he wants to appoint deputies in his government or not."

On Saturday, the annual Arab-European parliamentary conference will start here with the participation of delegations from 160 countries. Discussions are expected to focus on the activation of the Arab-Israeli peace process, the enhancement of the European role and sanctions on three Arab countries. The conference will also tackle terrorism, and Arab-European partnership.

Hans Klein, friend of Jordan — 1931-1996

AMMAN (J.T.) — The vice president of the German Bundestag (parliament) and former federal minister of economic cooperation, Hans Klein, passed away in Bonn on Nov. 26, following a severe heart attack. He was 65.

Mr. Klein was a friend of Jordan and a good friend of many Jordanian personalities and had served on the staff of the German embassy in Amman in the mid-sixties and other German embassies in the region.

Mr. Klein visited Jordan several times. His last visit was in October last year at the head of a large parliamentary delegation. During his last visit Mr.



Hans Klein

Klein met the speakers and members of Parliament to review Middle East peace and bilateral relations.

Mr. Klein is survived by his wife and three sons.

No more free telephone calls for civil servants

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A decision to withdraw all telephone lines given to government employees as well as members of the Council of Ministers in recognition of their official status was taken in view of the privatisation of the state-owned telecommunications company, official sources said Wednesday.

The decision was announced on Tuesday by Telecommunications Minister Jamal Sarai, who is also chairman of the National Telecommunications Company, in a statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The withdrawal of lines — estimated to run into

several thousands — takes effect on Jan. 1, 1997. Telephone lines obtained by civil servants and ministers in their private capacity are not expected to be affected by the move because they settle the related bills themselves.

"It simply means no more free telephone calls for civil servants as of the beginning of next year," said an official source.

Exemptions from the cancellation of lines will be made only under specific recommendations made by the prime minister — meaning that the government will settle the bills to the National Telecommunications Company, the former Telecommunications

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Palestinians to boycott most multilateral talks

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) will boycott most multilateral peace talks to protest Israel's delay in implementing PLO-Israel interim peace deals signed last year, PLO officials said on Tuesday.

"The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) decided...that its delegations will boycott all multilateral talks, except those tackling the refugees issue, as a protest against lack of progress in bilateral peace talks as a result of Israel's lack of seriousness in implementing interim accords," Jamil Al Tarifi, Palestinian minister of civil affairs, told Reuters.

Palestinians fear Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who opposed Israel's previous centre-left government in May elections, is bent on scrapping the peace process based on trading occupied Arab land for peace.

Mr. Netanyahu, who opposes trading land for peace, says he will nonetheless implement agreements signed between the PLO and Israel's former government.

On Tuesday, Mr. Netanyahu paid his first official visit to a Jewish settlement in the West Bank in a show of defiance to Palestinians opposed to his policy of expanding such outposts.

Mr. Netanyahu, who opposes creation of a Palestinian state, has approved building thousands of new homes in the settlements.

"What you don't understand is that there were elections in Israel? The Arab World doesn't understand that there were elections in Israel?...And why not develop communities here?" Mr. Netanyahu said to reporters.

PLO officials said the boycott would last until progress is achieved in talks on implementing

signed agreements on issues such as Israel's handover of most of Hebron and further West Bank redeployments and dates were set for resumption of final status peace talks.

Multilateral talks on five topics — economic cooperation, water, the environment, arms control and refugees — have been held since the Middle East peace talks were launched between Israel and the Palestinians.

Syria, Lebanon and Jordan in 1991. Syria and Lebanon from the outset boycotted the multilateral forums saying Israel should not be integrated into the region until there was progress in the bilateral negotiations.

PLO negotiator Hassan Asfour said co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States and Russia, as well as Europe and Arab states — all of which participate in the multilateral — had been notified of the PNA's decision.

Role of UNRWA and crisis facing it emphasised at special committee talks

NEW YORK — The United Nations General Assembly has completed the first stage in its annual consideration of the United Nations Relief and Work Agency's (UNRWA) work when the assembly's Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (Fourth Committee) concluded a two-day debate on the agency's activities on behalf of 3.3 million Palestinian refugees.

The committee annually reviews the work of UNRWA and submits a report and draft resolutions for approval by the General Assembly, which established the agency in December 1949 as a temporary measure to provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestine refugees.

This year's debate opened on Nov. 22 with the presentation by UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen of his annual report to the General Assembly. The committee then heard statements from the representatives of 27 national delegations, from the European Union and 11 associated countries and from the observers of Palestine, Switzerland and the Holy See.

The debate was marked by unanimous support for the work of the UNRWA, particularly in the difficult circumstances confronting the refugees in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Lebanon. There were also expressions of concern from virtually every speaker about the critical financial situation of the agency, which faces an estimated 1996 budget deficit of \$11.7 million, plus a shortage of \$3.9 million to

complete the financing of the relocation of UNRWA's headquarters from Vienna to the region during the year.

Speakers also expressed grave concern about the constraints hindering the work of the agency — and the hardships suffered by the refugees — as a consequence of the protracted closures imposed by the Israeli authorities on the residents of the Palestinian self-rule areas.

While commending the commissioner-general and his staff for the efforts they were making to improve the accountability of the agency through a dialogue with donors, improved financial transparency and management reforms, many speakers said that UNRWA's very existence, and therefore the security and welfare of the refugees, was threatened by the structural deficit caused by a shortfall of voluntary contributions to UNRWA's budget. It was repeatedly stressed that it was up to the international community to provide the agency with the resources it required to carry out its vital work, and that the continuation of UNRWA's humanitarian services to the refugees was a crucial element in the Middle East peace process.

Nasser Al Kidwa, permanent observer of Palestine to the United Nations, recalled how UNRWA had played a crucial role over the years in preventing the exacerbation of the human catastrophe which had affected the Palestine refugees and had greatly helped in providing the necessary relief and education for generations of

refugees. "Today, UNRWA still performs valuable work, and such work should continue in all fields of operations until a definitive solution to the problem is reached," he said.

A statement issued by the United States noted how the U.S., the largest single donor country to the agency, was pleased with the progress towards closer cooperation between UNRWA and the major donors on budgetary issues. "UNRWA finances continue to need support. We urge the international community to extend its full assistance and cooperation to UNRWA to assist it in successfully carrying out its mandate," the U.S. statement said. "UNRWA's work is a key element in maintaining an environment conducive to forward movement in the peace process."

Mr. Hansen expressed appreciation on behalf of all UNRWA staff for the "constructive spirit" of the discussion and for the understanding and support shown for the agency. "With the level of empathy and understanding that I have heard in the course of this debate, I will return to Gaza and prepare to come back to New York for the UNRWA pledging conference on Dec. 5 in a very optimistic mood. I hope that both existing and new contributors to UNRWA will bring us safely not only through 1997, but through every year in the future where UNRWA will have to fulfill its obligations to the Palestine refugees," Mr. Hansen said. — UNRWA press release.



IRANIAN LOOKALIKES: Lookalikes of (left to right) Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Intelligence Minister Ali Fallahian and supreme leader of the Islamic republic Ayatollah Ali Khamenei pose during a demonstration of Iranian dissidents in Bonn on Wednesday. A thousand people demonstrated against the Islamic regime in Iran and for the end of the policy of 'critical dialogue' between Germany and Iran (Reuters photo)

Thousands flee as Taleban tighten grip

KABUL (AFP) — Thousands of Afghan civilians were fleeing villages north of the capital Kabul Wednesday as the Taleban consolidated its grip on newly captured territory.

The militia captured the villages of Kalakan and Istif Tuesday from opposition coalition forces with minimal fighting, Taleban soldiers and fleeing villagers told AFP close to the frontlines.

"Most of the fighting was concentrated on the main road, as the Taleban were advancing," said Shamsuddin, a resident of Kalakan.

The village of Kalakan is on the so-called Old Road 40 kilometres due north of Kabul, while Istif is 15 kilometres further northwest, below a range of snowy mountains.

The Old Road is one of two northbound highways exiting Kabul, where most of the fighting between the Taleban and the opposing coalition — made up of ousted government troops loyal to Ahmad Shah Masoud and forces of northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostom — has been concentrated.

On this highway a moving stream of well over 2,000 displaced civilians was counted by journalists. They were fleeing the fighting in which many villages were heavily damaged by the intense exchange of rockets and artillery.

These local civilians, some on overcrowded buses but most on foot and carrying whatever belongings they could manage, were heading south to seek sanctuary in the

now-peaceful capital Kabul. Frontline Taleban soldiers said they were conducting a mopping-up operation in their captured territory, involving house-to-house searches through farm buildings in the once-thriving agricultural area.

Civilians fleeing the area were subject to close searches at Taleban checkpoints on the main road, where the ultra-strict fundamentalist militia confiscated and smashed "un-Islamic" music cassette-tapes which they hung from their posts.

The frontlines between the opposing forces are now at the Old Road district centre of Qarabagh, with the Taleban militia firmly in positions on the south side of town. Taleban fighters confirmed.

Analysts speculated that should Qarabagh fall to the militia, the anti-Taleban alliance would be forced to withdraw to the provincial centre of Chankar, 65 kilometres north of Kabul, and tighten their defences around the nearby Bagram military airbase.

This Taleban offensive — the first major change in front-line territory in a month — is a serious setback for ex-government commander Masoud, who was pushed out of the capital on Sept. 27.

The Taleban advance could spell the end to his plans to recapture the capital before the winter snows come the below-freezing temperatures make conditions for fighting more difficult.

Iran puts defence budget at \$2.7b but actual figure could be much higher

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has allocated an average of \$2.7 billion a year to the defence budget since the end of the 1980-1988 war against Iraq, a senior official said Wednesday.

Deputy Parliamentary Speaker Hassan Ruhani said during a session of the assembly that the figure was very low for a country as big as Iran and with a population of more than 60 million.

"This is a good indication that we do not pursue an aggressive policy despite the malicious propaganda against the Islamic republic," he said.

Mr. Ruhani, who is also secretary of the National Security Council, the highest political and military decision-making body in Iran, compared his country's defence budget to those of the Gulf Arab neighbours across the Gulf, which he said were "disproportionate".

"Our per capita defence budget is \$45, while that of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait is over \$1,000," he said.

The official did not specify based on what rate he had calculated the defence budget as there are two different official rates here against foreign currency — 1,750 and 3,000 rials to the dollar. The price on the open market is 4,500 rials to the dollar.

Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, submitting a budget proposal for next year to the parliament, said Sunday that around 8.3 trillion rials had been appropriated for defence.

The figure would amount to \$4.7 billion if calculated based on 1,750 rials to the dollar, which is generally the case with defence purchases.

Mr. Ruhani also criticised the presence of American forces in the Gulf, charging that it created "tension" in the region. American warships have been stationed in the region since a U.S.-led military coalition drove Iraqi occupation troops from Kuwait in 1991.

"We hope our Arab brothers in the Gulf will realise the fact that security would only be guaranteed through friendship and good neighbourly ties and not by piling weapons purchased from foreigners," Mr. Ruhani warned.

He nevertheless called for a strong navy to serve as a deterrent against possible foreign attack, saying Iran had common sea borders with 12 countries.

The Iranian navy and the elite Revolutionary Guards are presently engaged in major manoeuvres in the Gulf and Oman Sea.

American and British officials have said the U.S. and allied warships would "closely" monitor the manoeuvres to assess Iran's military capabilities.

Israeli doctors reject British move against circumcision

AMMAN (J.T.) — A proposal by the British Medical Association (BMA) to declare circumcision "a barbaric act that causes physical and emotional harm" has been shelved by the World Medical Association (WMA) at the initiative of the Israeli Medical Association (IMA), an Israeli newspaper reported yesterday.

At the WMA meeting, attended by physicians from 80 countries and held in South Africa a few weeks ago, the British association called for a declaration stating that male circumcision should not be carried out for medical reasons because of the "harm" it allegedly causes, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Circumcision opponents claimed circumcision can cause the loss of sexual pleasure as well as traumatic for the child.

The English language Jerusalem Post quoted IMA chairman Yoram Blachar as saying his organisation feared that a resolution disapproving of circumcision for medical reasons would lead in the future to censure of ritual circumcision as practiced in many countries.

The IMA set up a multi-disciplinary medical team that examined circumcision from the medical, psychological and ethical aspects. The conclusions were that surgical removal of the foreskin is not dangerous and even greatly reduces urinary infections and penile cancer.

In addition, cervical cancer among female partners of circumcised men is very low, the Jerusalem Post said.

Lebanon orders ban on guns

BEIRUT (AFP) — The government decided Wednesday to impose a ban on carrying arms on the eve of a nationwide general strike and demonstration in the Lebanese capital in defiance of a ban. Licences for carrying arms have been suspended, the Defence Ministry said. Only official bodyguards are exempted.

The same measure was adopted for a general strike on Feb. 29. The army was put in charge of internal security for a three-month period and imposed a curfew on the day itself.

Lebanon's main trade union body has called another strike and a demonstration for Thursday to protest against the social policies of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's government and its "repression of public freedom."

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Iris and Orike and the Gang
14:35 Out of This World (comedy)
15:00 Corington Cross
15:30 Feature: The Young Adventures
17:00 News Flash
17:02 Continuation of Film
17:30 Le Monde Est a Vous
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Atmos
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Pacific Station (Comedy)
20:00 The American Chart Show
20:30 Material World
21:00 Kung Fu
22:00 News in English
01:25 Feature: Mixed Blessings

PRAYER TIMES

04:49 Fajr
06:10 Sunrise/Duha
11:23 Dhuhir
14:12 Asr
16:36 Maghreb
17:57 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swaifish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654032
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

Deserts 08/20
Jordan Valley 16/27

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 17, Aqaba 28 Humidity readings: Amman 82 per cent, Aqaba 45 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalil Al Tustug 757253
Dr. Bahjat Bader 832642
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 830432
Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi 893542
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asenna pharmacy 637055
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir 276852
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Walid Nabhan 995743
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Response 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 343402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Int'l Airport 08-53200

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 166124/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir, 775111/2b

Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital 109/83323

Zarqa National Hospital 109/90560

Ibn Sina Hospital 019/86732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital 019/99490

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital 021275555

Greek Catholic Hospital 021272375

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 021247100

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FOR THE TRAVELLER

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FOR THE TRAVELLER

Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 109/53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08/53250.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights:

08:15 Bombay (RJ)

08:30 Sana'a (RJ)

09:15 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

09:45 New Delhi (RJ)

10:05 Beirut (RJ)

10:30 Colombo (RJ)

14:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

16:25 London (RJ)

17:35 Moscow (RJ)

18:50 Casablanca, Athens (RJ)

19:05 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)

19:25 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

19:40 Rome (RJ)

21:15 Kuala Lumpur, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

04:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

05:50 London, Birmingham (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

11:00 Doha (Q7)

12:40 Doha (GF)

13:30 Riyadh (SV)

14:10 Sharjah (AH)

21:40 Tel Aviv (LY)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:20 Aqaba (RW)

18:55 Tel Aviv (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:20 Beirut (RJ)

07:15 Moscow (RJ)

10:50 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)

11:00 Amsterdam, Montreal, Toronto (RJ)

11:15 Rome (RJ)

12:10 Paris (RJ)

12:15 London (RJ)

13:30 Athens, Malta (RJ)

Queen gives keynote address at Cambridge Union Society

AMMAN (J.T.) — The search for peace in the Middle East is still "beset by increasingly explosive issues of human rights abuses, collective punishments and violence" as well as a "growing inflexibility on crucial issues like water rights, frontiers and the continued expansion of illegal settlements," Her Majesty Queen Noor Tuesday said during her keynote address at the Cambridge Union Society in England.

According to a Royal Court statement, the Queen noted that a study by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESWAS) demonstrated that since 1967, "Israeli authorities and settlers have confiscated over two-thirds of the West Bank and over 40 per cent of the Gaza Strip, for whom, being a rural community reliant on agricultural production, the loss is doubly devastating."

She added that the "much delayed Israeli redeployment from Hebron where 400 settlers are located among 120,000 Palestinians and the maximalist Israeli position on the status of Jerusalem" is causing people throughout the Middle East "to question whether these strifes that have been made towards peace will in fact ever live up to their heightened expectations."

While Jordan, the Queen said, has been "firmly convinced that the peace process in the Middle East was irreversible, the lack of implementation of accords reached on the Palestinian-Israeli track and, to some extent, of some of the bilateral agreements between Jordan and Israel have demonstrated the fragility of the progress," the statement said.

The Queen cited five major challenges which, she stated, must be met to build a comprehensive and enduring peace, foremost among which is "to complete the Arab-Israeli peace process without delay and within a well defined time frame."

She affirmed that the quality of peace and the attainment of its full promise depend entirely on the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its dimensions and among all concerned parties, the statement said.

Fostering regional economic cooperation, according to the Queen, is also vital since "only seven per cent of

trade in the Middle East is internal." Integrating the Middle East in the global system of liberalised trade and capital markets, through reform policies and investment-friendly environments, will "promote joint ventures, higher productivity and increased job opportunities," the Queen stated.

This is of critical importance for the region, which has "one of the highest unemployment rates in the world" and where nearly "three-fourths of the population have a per capita income of only about \$1,000 per year."

Such economic restructuring, noted the Queen, must be accompanied by the reduction of social and economic disparities within our societies as well as domestic political reform, the statement said.

She described participatory decision-making as an essential guarantor of peace and emphasised the importance of integrating culturally appropriate democratic values in national political structures that draw upon "the rich variety of participatory decision-making traditions in Arab Islamic culture."

Such challenges can and should be addressed internationally with the help of Europe and the international community as well as on a domestic level, the Queen said.

She added that "the forces for peace in the Arab World and Israel alike should be mobilised to exert a more powerful influence and face these challenges."

Jordan, according to the Queen, has embarked on fundamental reforms in two spheres, namely democratisation and economic structural reform; it has "liberalised its trade system, reduced tariffs, simplified trade laws and enacted new laws that are transparent and investor friendly."

She added that "a major feature of our economy in the coming years will be the expansion of the private sector's role in initiating infrastructure projects, particularly in the fields of communications, energy, transport, water and tourism."

The Queen noted that Jordan's legal, administrative and fiscal measures have earned it "the recognition of the European Union as the most advanced country in

the region in implementing market reforms," the statement said.

Such economic liberalisation has had a "tremendously positive impact on our macro-economic indicators," where the country has maintained a 6 per cent annual growth rate since 1992, unemployment dropped from 25 per cent to 15 per cent, inflation has been contained at 4 per cent and exports increased by 25 per cent last year with a projected 9 per cent increase by the end of 1996.

She added that while political and economic reforms are crucial, their integration with participatory decision-making, gender equity and comprehensive development will help create an environment that will foster peace and accelerate the transition from wasteful militarism to productive economic cooperation.

The Queen concluded by saying that the "quality of peace, combined with prospects for progress, regionalisation and globalisation in the Middle East, will determine if all in our region will advance or retreat, prosper or flounder."

A just and comprehensive peace which is accepted by all Middle Eastern peoples will enable us to "build upon our progress and promote cooperation with the rest of the world that fuels economic development, cultural exchange and mutual respect," she said.

After the speech, The Queen answered questions about the impact of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's election on the peace process, Jordan's economy, the status of Jerusalem, internal division within Israel as well as Jordan's bilateral trade agreements with the 'Palestinian' National Authority.

Since its foundation in 1815, the Cambridge Union Society has occupied a central position in Cambridge University's undergraduate life.

The union has recently hosted lectures by international figures such as the Prince of Wales, Chancellor Kohl, the Dalai Lama, George Shultz, Casper Weinberger and Professor Stephen Hawking.

Seriat Leila Sbaraf and Advisor to the Queen Lina Toukan attended the lecture.

Ministry to inspect flood damage, condoles relatives of deceased

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities was Wednesday making arrangements to transport the body of Tom Van Doep, the 62 year old Dutch tourist killed in flash floods, to the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Doep and Fayeze Aqrabawi, his tourist guide, were killed Monday in flash floods hitting the southern regions of Jordan.

The body of Mr. Aqrabawi was also delivered to his family in Aqaba, according to Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Saleh Irshaidat.

Dr. Irshaidat visited the widow of Mr. Van Doep Wednesday at the Amra hotel to convey the Kingdom's condolences and inspected measures and services being accorded to her as well as arrangements for transportation of the body.

Hassan Hilalat, 17, also drowned and his body was found Tuesday morning in the city of Petra.

The floods resulted from torrential rains which hit Petra, Wadi Mousa and Ma'an, causing extensive damage to roads and other property as well as washing away seven vehicles and various construction materials.

The floods carried earth and rocks which had partially blocked roads in the Ma'an, Petra and Eel areas and disrupted

electric power supplies.

Teams from the Ministry of Public Works and the district electricity department were Wednesday reported as continuing repairs and reopening roads.

Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Hadi Majali affirmed that his ministry will dispatch a team of engineers and other officials to study the situation and duly submit a detailed report.

This projected report will be presented to the Council of Ministers who will deem which measures would be appropriate to alleviate the situation.

Also Wednesday, Ma'an Governor Abdul Ghani Abdullah inspected the district of Al Jafer where floods caused some damage to public and private property.

The Jordanian Armed Forces has been providing equipment to help local repair teams carry out this task.

In the meantime, the Department of Meteorology forecast further scattered showers in the northern and southern areas as a result of unstable weather conditions.

The department also warned of poor visibility in the early morning hours.

Peace process scenarios to be debated in seminar

By Francesca Ciriaci
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — "And what if the peace process fails..." is the enigmatic theme of a three-day conference to convene here next month and slated to be attended by more than 70 prominent scholars and experts worldwide.

The conference, hosted by the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research AL al Bait Foundation, and to be held at the InterContinental hotel, has been organised by the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Established by King Hassan of Morocco, the Academy counts among its members scholars from diverse Islamic countries and is holding its autumn session in Amman upon the invitation of HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, himself a member of the Academy.

Assistant to the president as well as dialogue coordinator at AL al Bait Foundation, Farouq Jarrar, confirmed that three Jordanian speakers will contribute to the debate.

Senator and former Prime Minister Zeid Rifai, Senator and former Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber and Senator and former Minister of Information Jawad Anani will state their views before the international audience over the future of the peace process and possible scenarios in case peace negotiations fail.

The conference will be held under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, who is also the patron of AL al Bait Foundation.

Dr. Jarrar explained that the foundation, established in 1980 and containing more than 100 members from 38 countries, is an international independent Islamic body aimed at promoting and implementing research on all aspects of Islamic civilisation, "intended in the broadest sense."

Inter-faith dialogue is of paramount importance among the foundation's objectives.

"Not only does AL al Bait Foundation focus on Muslim-Christian dialogue, but it also promotes inter-faith dialogue among different schools of thought in Islam, (i.e. Sunni-Shiite dialogue)," Dr. Jarrar said, adding that the foundation has previously organised four inter-Muslim conferences and 16 Muslim-Christian meetings in Amman and Europe.

AL al Bait Foundation also heads the Higher Committee for the History of Jordan, "an independent committee of scholars which has already published 52 books, mostly in Arabic, on the history of Jordan," Dr. Jarrar said.

Workshop covers role of political parties

By Christina Schlegel
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A two-day workshop regarding the role of political parties in Jordan will be held on Dec. 1st and 2nd at the Royal Cultural Centre and organised by the German-based Konrad Adenauer Foundation in cooperation with the New Jordan Research Centre (NJRC).

The workshop, which was originally to be held in September, will look into the reasons for what the NJRC described as the "low profile" of Jordanian political parties and will also discuss ways of strengthening this role for the upcoming 1997 elections.

A statement released by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation said that since the reintroduction of political parties, as of Sep. 1, 1992, some 23 parties registered, but failed to play a major role in the 1993 elections.

The workshop's programme is divided into six panels and includes lectures by local experts as well as participants from German political parties (the Christian Democratic Party (CDP)) as well as the Lebanese University in Beirut.

The first day's session will cover topics such as "Realities of party work in Jordan," "Experience of political parties — a comparative approach" and "The political programme and participatory party work."

The second day will focus on

"Political parties and elections," "Improving political parties' work in society" and "The future of political party work in Jordan," all of which will subsequently be analysed in a round table discussion.

"The workshop," researcher Hamed Dabbas from the NJRC Wednesday told the Jordan Times, "is aimed to give Jordanian political parties the chance to overcome obstacles — both internal and external — to party work and to demonstrate possible methods of effective party building."

Another major topic will be the encouragement of women in political participation.

"Up until the present time," Mr. Dabbas said, "women's interest in political party participation has been very low and we hope to improve the situation with this seminar."

The conference organisers also hope to increase awareness of the Jordanian democratic process, stimulate interest in working within political parties and encourage a more active role within the framework of political life, he stated.

According to the NJRC, 16 of Jordan's political parties will participate in the workshop.

Princess inaugurates projects in Baqa'a refugee camp

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath Al Hassan Wednesday inaugurated two pioneering projects established by the Young Women's Christian Association of Amman in the Baqa'a Refugee Camp, a Y.M.C.A. statement said.

The first project is a bakery described as an income-generating project which aims at providing employment opportunities for women refugees in order to earn some income and improve their quality of life as well as contribute both economically and socially to their self-support.

The second project is a family counselling centre whose main objective is to aid women increase their awareness and participation in social and environmental activities and offer access to health, education, and legal counselling.

Following the inauguration of the two projects, the Princess visited the Y.M.C.A.'s kindergarten and production centre, the statement said.

President of the YWCA Laurie Hlass delivered a speech in which she thanked the ambassadors, international and local institutions and friends who contributed to the establishment of these projects among whom are the Delegation of the European Commission in Jordan/the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development



HRH Princess Sarvath Al Hassan Wednesday opens pioneering projects at the Baqa'a Refugee Camp. The Princess is accompanied by Y.W.C.A. President Laurie Hlass (Photo by Boghos)

(USAID), the British Embassy, the Embassy of the Netherlands, the Tamari Sabbagh Foundation, Abdul Muhssen Kattau, the Industrial Development Bank, Suhail Khoury, owner of the Rabia Bakenies and others.

She then signed a grant agreement for the YWCA with Ambassador of Japan to Jordan Takayuki Kimura which stipulated the provision of a mini-bus to serve the organisation's needs and the

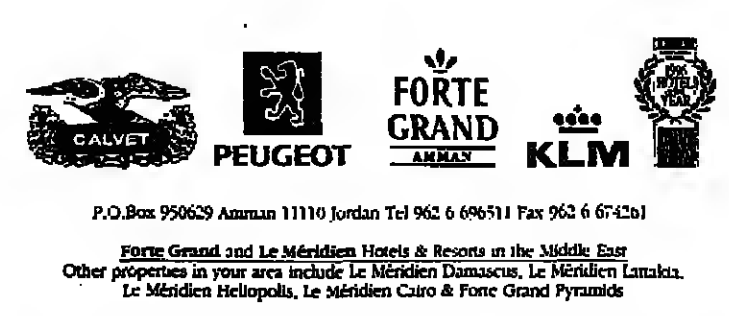
What's Going On

- FILMS**
- "Si te dicen que caí" at Insituo Cervantes, Jabal Amman, on Thursday at 4:30 p.m.
- PLAY**
- "The City of Sawsanah" (Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.
- LECTURE**
- "15th Century Renaissance in Full Bloom" (with commentary in Arabic by Adnan Al Sharif) at Darat Al Fann, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
- SEMINAR**
- Discussion on the works of Sculptor Mustafa Ali at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
- EXHIBITION/SALE**
- Exhibition/Sale of antiques, crafts, old engravings, photographs, old maps and cartography of Jerusalem and the Holy Land at Uni Al Kundum, exit to Kan Zaman to the Arabian Horse Club, 1st left on top of the hill, on Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- EXHIBITIONS**
- Aspects from the modern Jordanian plastic art by several Jordanian artists entitled "Message" at Allia Art Gallery, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 28.
 - Photo exhibition by Basma Asfour entitled "Doubles Regards" at the French Cultural Centre, until Nov. 28.

"Vive La difference"
Amman Bookshop

THE BEAUJOLAIS CELEBRATION AT FORTE GRAND AMMAN

Every year on the 3rd Thursday of the month of November, France celebrates the arrival of Beaujolais Nouveau, an old French tradition originating from a place where gastronomy is a real art. The Andalusia Restaurant at Forte Grand Amman takes pride in offering you a selection of specialties from the Beaujolais region. A superb à la carte menu presented to you, and entertainment by Accordionist Mathieu Pallas flown in directly from Paris. Starting November 28th through December 5th '96 from 7pm onwards.



Advance U.S., Canada and U.K. troops prepare for Zaire force

KAMPALA (AFP) — An advance force of more than 550 U.S., Canadian and British soldiers have arrived in Uganda to start preparing for a planned multinational task force for Zaire, in case it is given the go-ahead.

The troops, which arrived at Uganda's Entebbe Airport two weeks ago, include a 250-strong contingent from the United States, 260 Canadians and 48 British. A further 60 Canadian and U.S. troops are already in the Rwandan capital, Kigali.

On arrival, the three-nation Joint Task Force took over the top floor of the Entebbe Airport building, where they are operating independently, although they share information and work on related projects.

On Tuesday, Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy suggested that the International Community should at least organise an airdrop of aid to the refugees in Zaire, and said that an international relief mission could be based at Entebbe, from which supplies could be parachuted into Zaire.

The Americans, who have code-named their project, Guardian Assistance, have said that their task is to assess the refugee situation

in eastern Zaire and Rwanda and pass on the information to humanitarian organisations trying to track down and resettle refugees returning to Rwanda from Zaire.

The U.S. team gets its information mainly from aerial reconnaissance photographs taken by their three P1 naval aircraft, which fly every day over eastern Zaire.

"With the means we have, we can't tell one group (Rwandan refugees or Zairean soldiers) from another, but we can tell their movement, concentration and size quite accurately," the U.S. joint task force commander Major-General Edwin Smith told AFP Wednesday.

Gen. Smith said the groups are identified by their formation and location and, for example, an estimated group of 30-35,000 people moving further into Zaire along a main road and staying in camps close to towns are far more likely to be Zairean soldiers than refugees.

Gen. Smith estimated that there were still a significant number of refugees inside Zaire, and said: "The overall estimate is somewhere between 200,000 and 250,000 people."

Asked what the U.S. mili-

tary was doing with other information they may have gathered from the reconnaissance flights, such as the massing of Zairean troops for a counter-offensive against the Banyamulenge Tutsi rebels, Gen. Smith replied: "We don't necessarily have access to that kind of information. That is not really within our mandate."

The U.S. force comes from the Southern Europe Command, based in southern Italy, where other forces are ready for deployment once a decision on a multinational force has been reached.

The small British team, noticeably lacking the laptops and hi-tech equipment of their trans-Atlantic colleagues, is also involved in aerial reconnaissance with a Canberra plane, which flies two-daily missions, taking about 600 photographs on each flight.

The pictures are laboriously analysed, although a mass exodus of people moving along a main road shows only as speckles of white along a ribbon a few millimetres thick.

The British have also made their photos available to humanitarian organisations, but their main purpose is to provide indepen-

dent information to the British government about the situation in Zaire.

The Canadians, meanwhile, have been preparing the ground for the proposed multinational force, which has Canadian Lieutenant-General Maurice Baril as its designated head, and which will be based in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. Gen. Baril flew into Uganda Tuesday night.

The British, Canadian and U.S. military teams insist that they are not frustrated as they wait to hear word from Stuttgart, Germany, about what final form the relief mission to Zaire might take.

"We are part of a Joint Task Force that may never fully deploy, but is already executing key tasks in Central Africa ... Our central mission is still evolving," a statement taped to the window of the U.S. Guardian Assistance Mission said.

This is the second time in as many years that foreign troops have camped out at Entebbe, the last one being in 1994 when the U.S. based its relief missions to Rwanda for two months during earlier ethnic upheavals that left at least half a million people dead.



U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson waves as he helps a weary-looking Carl Hunziker from a U.S. Air Force plane at Yokota Air Base on the outskirts of Tokyo Wednesday. Mr. Hunziker was detained in North Korea for three months and was only released after Mr. Richardson negotiated the Korean-American's release (Reuters photo)

N. Korea wants to resolve submarine incident, move forward — Richardson

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan (AFP) — North Korea wants to put behind it an alleged spy submarine incident that has raised tensions on the Korean peninsula and move ahead with a nuclear agreement, a U.S. politician said Wednesday.

"My sense is that the North Korean government wants to put the submarine incident behind it and reengage itself with the international community," said U.S. Representative Bill Richardson.

The Democrat congressman, who returned from Pyongyang with American missionary Evan Carl Hunziker, 26, who had been arrested in North Korea on Aug. 24 and charged with being a spy, said: "I believe my trip has had a positive effect."

Mr. Hunziker, whose mother is of Korean ancestry, was arrested in North Korea on Aug. 24 and charged with spying for South Korea. The charge, which can carry the death penalty, was denied by U.S. officials and his family.

The North Korean government told me it was committed to continue moving forward to implement the agreed framework, that is the nuclear agreement. That is a positive step," Mr. Richardson told a news conference at this U.S. Air Force base on the outskirts of Tokyo on his return with Mr. Hunziker.

Tensions between Seoul and Pyongyang have been running high since a North Korean submarine ran

aground on Sept. 18 in South Korea with 26 men aboard.

One was captured, one is either dead or missing, and the rest are believed to have been killed by comrades trying to escape or were shot by South Korean soldiers.

Pyeongyang said the ship drifted off-course and was vehemently denied it was on a spying mission.

"The submarine incident has had a serious effect and I was pleased that the North Korean government voiced a willingness to take steps to resolve the submarine incident," Mr. Richardson said.

South Korean President Kim Young-Sam had reportedly said that Seoul did not want to hold peace talks or provide support to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) until and unless the north apologised for the submarine incursion.

KEDO was formed in 1995 as a follow-up to the 1994 nuclear accord under which North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear energy programme in exchange for the supply of two light-water reactors.

But Sunday in Manila, the day before a summit of 18 leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, Mr. Kim told his counterparts from the United States and Japan that his country would continue to search for peace on the Korean peninsula, despite the submarine incursion.

"There is no change in our

stance on the existing policy, such as support for four-way peace talks and North Korea's efforts to introduce light-water nuclear reactors," Mr. Kim was quoted by officials as telling Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto.

Following a later meeting between Mr. Kim and U.S. President Bill Clinton, the pair released a joint statement in which they "called upon the North to take acceptable steps to resolve the submarine incident, reduce tension and avoid such provocations in the future."

In their joint statement, Mr. Clinton and Mr. Kim said the agreed framework on the freeze "will be implemented."

Mr. Kim and Mr. Clinton also "reaffirmed their strong support" for four-party talks between North and South Korea, the United States and China on the issue, which had been proposed after the two presidents last met in April.

Pyeongyang has yet to reply to the proposal.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher co-confirmed on Nov. 20 that China had agreed to join the proposed four-party talks.

The United States and South Korea proposed in April that peace talks involving Seoul, Pyongyang, Washington and Beijing be started in an effort to resolve a stalemate — with the two Koreas still officially at war following the armistice at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Burma shrugs off Clinton's criticisms

BANGKOK (R) — A senior Burmese government official Wednesday dismissed comments by U.S. President Bill Clinton criticising the military government for failing to restore democracy to the country.

"We don't really have any comment on what he said," said the official, who read a transcript of the speech Mr. Clinton delivered at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University Tuesday.

"They have been saying this for years, there's nothing new in his speech," he said in a telephone interview from Rangoon.

In a speech praising most Asia-Pacific nations for their efforts to bring democracy to the region, Mr. Clinton singled out Burma for its failure to recognise a democratically elected government, saying it showed Rangoon had no rule of law.

Mr. Clinton, on a brief visit to Thailand, also criticised Burma for being the world's number one opium and heroin producer.

"The role of drugs in Burma's economic and political life and the regime's refusal to honour its own pledge to move to multi-party democracy are really two sides of the same coin, for both represent the absence of the rule of law," he said.

"Every nation has an interest in promoting true political dialogue in Burma — a dialogue that will lead to a real fight against crime, corruption and narcotics and a government more acceptable to its people," Mr. Clinton said.

Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party won a landslide victory in a 1990 general election, but the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) never recognised the results of the poll.

Ms. Suu Kyi, who was under house arrest during the election, has made repeated unanswered calls since her release last year for the SLORC to recognise the poll results or at least open talks with the NLD on how to bring democracy to Burma.

Burma's military rulers have also been accused by the United Nations and others of human rights abuses and for suppressing basic freedoms.

In a series of crackdowns on the democracy movement, the SLORC has arrested and released nearly 1,000 NLD members or supporters since May for trying to hold meetings.

Burmese exile groups based in Bangkok, many of which had written to Mr. Clinton urging him to speak out on Burma during his visit to Asia, applauded the president for raising the profile of Burma's problems.

But they said more needed to be done, and noted that Mr. Clinton had stopped short of taking a strong stance.

"This is the first step, having the U.S. here," said Zaw Min, a spokesman for the all Burma student's democratic front, whose members fled Burma during the 1988 pro-democracy demonstrations that the military crushed.

"It is a positive step, although he didn't mention very strongly what they would do," he told Reuters.

Washington has slapped a visa ban on senior SLORC officials and has passed legislation allowing Mr. Clinton to impose economic sanctions if repression in Burma worsens or if Ms. Suu Kyi is re-arrested.

Some democracy activists have said the recent SLORC crackdown on the NLD should be enough to warrant the imposition of sanctions.



Mother Teresa in a prayer pose while she is being moved from one hospital to another in India's eastern city of Calcutta. The 86-year-old Nobel laureate has been in hospital with heart trouble since Nov. 22 and is being kept under observation for the next few days (Reuters photo)

Doctors: Mother Teresa unstable

CALCUTTA (R) — Mother Teresa suffered repeated chest pains in an Indian heart clinic Wednesday as members of her Roman Catholic religious order prayed for her recovery.

"She is having repeated episodes of chest pains and she is unstable," A.K. Chatterjee, administrator of Calcutta's B.M. Birla Heart Research Centre in Calcutta, told reporters.

Doctors earlier delayed an angiography X-ray test to see if the 86-year-old nun needed surgery.

"She is not out of danger now. Things can turn bad at any moment," Dr Tarun Prabhakar, a member of her medical team, said.

Mother Teresa had a generally peaceful night. "She is cheerful, she is talking and she is smiling," Mr. Chatterjee said, adding that she had sandwiches and tea for breakfast.

"Considering her age and history of heart disease, she is critical. The doctors will take a decision when to go for angiography by this

evening," Mr. Chatterjee added.

Members of her Missionaries of Charity Religious Order prayed for the recovery of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize winner.

"We are having prayers all over the world for her recovery," Sister Priscilla, the Order's spokeswoman, said. Calcutta's Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs joined in prayers.

The Charity, devoted to the poor, destitute and dying, has about 4,500 nuns in some 80 countries. "We are all praying and we believe she will be alright," said Mohammed Halim, an inmate of the Order's Nirmal Hriday (innocent heart) home in Calcutta, eastern India.

"She gave us shelter and saved us from a shameful death in Calcutta's streets. God will save her," he said.

Doctors said they would have to stabilise Mother Teresa before deciding when to carry out an angiography. She was moved to the clinic Tuesday from the

nearby Woodlands Nursing Home, where she was admitted last Friday after with an irregular heartbeat.

"Our plan is to make her stable and, since the situation is critical, we will first have to make her stable and then think about angiography," Mr. Chatterjee said.

Doctors had said Tuesday that Mother Teresa might undergo an angiography — an X-ray of blood vessels to detect arterial blockage — Wednesday.

But late Tuesday, Prabhakar said she was "clinically unstable" and ruled out the test for at least a couple of days. Mother Teresa, known as the "saint of the gutters" for her work with the poor, was fitted with a heart pacemaker in 1989.

She has undergone coronary angiography twice — in the United States in 1991 and at the Birla Centre in 1993.

Both times she subsequently underwent angioplasty, in which surgeons insert a balloon into an artery, then inflate it to

unlock the artery.

Indonesia frees all Megawati supporters from jail

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesian courts ordered the release Wednesday of all 124 supporters of opposition figure Megawati Sukarnoputri imprisoned since riots in July.

Judges delivering 10 separate verdicts in the central Jakarta state court acquitted nine of the accused and sentenced the other 115 to time already served in custody.

Those partially convicted strongly protested against the verdicts and said they would appeal in the high court.

"They will appeal because they do not feel they are guilty," said Tumbu Saraswati, one of the defence lawyers.

In one courtroom, the accused rushed toward the bench shouting, "it was engineered", but defence lawyers restrained them from approaching the judge after he read out the verdict, witnesses said.

Riot police then entered the courtroom and escorted the judge out. They stayed on for the other cases.

"Why have we not all been acquitted," asked Sandra Fentari, one of the five women among the accused, as tears rolled down her cheeks. "We have been marked by the law and it is not good for our families, my husband and my children."

She was consoling Megawati, who sat silently in one of the courtrooms as the verdict was read out. She cooled herself with a paper fan as the heat rose in the packed chamber.

In another courtroom, two of those on trial fainted and had to be revived.

All 124 of those arrested were barricaded inside the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) when police raided the building on July 27 to evict them.

The raid led to riots in Jakarta in which at least five people died. It was the worst violence in the city in more than two decades.

Megawati, daughter of late founding President Sukarno, was ousted from the PDI leadership in June by a government-backed faction, and her supporters had vowed not to give up the party headquarters to their opponents.

Burma membership seen dominating ASEAN summit

JAKARTA (R) — The question of Burma's entry into ASEAN is expected to be centre-stage at this week's summit of the south-east Asian grouping, ministers and diplomats said Wednesday.

All Alatus, foreign minister of host Indonesia, told reporters that none of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' seven members opposed the entry of Burma, or Myanmar. He said discussion of the issue during the summit was possible.

"In principle, the entry of Myanmar into ASEAN poses no problems to ASEAN. All ASEAN members are agreed that Myanmar needs to enter, needs to be accepted as a member."

Diplomats said what was at issue was when Burma, the focus of international concern over its human rights record, would be granted entry.

ASEAN — which groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — is to hold its annual summit in Jakarta Saturday. Also attending will be leaders from observer countries Laos, Cambodia and Burma.

The one-day, free-wheeling meeting has no papers and no fixed agenda, diplomats and officials said. But the recent airing of differences by ASEAN leaders on when to

grant Burma full membership in the group is likely to occupy centre-stage.

"We cannot say what they will talk about," said a Jakarta-based diplomat from one of the ASEAN nations. "But I would expect quite a lot of discussion on Myanmar."

The Burma issue has dominated ASEAN since the military government in Rangoon launched a fresh crackdown on the democracy movement of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in April.

Western nations and human rights activists have said that accepting Burma's application for full membership in ASEAN would be tantamount to approving Rangoon's policies.

ASEAN follows a strict policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of member nations and officially maintains that constructive engagement with Burma is the best way to achieve political reform in that country. Isolating Rangoon would be counter-productive, its leaders have argued.

But last month, Philippine President Fidel Ramos said ASEAN could review its constructive engagement policy with Burma. Then Amnauy Viravan, then Thailand's foreign minister, said Rangoon should introduce democracy before joining the group.

Earlier this month, Singapore Prime Minister Goh

Chok Tong, whose country has made heavy investments in Burma, caused a stir when he said he did not think Rangoon was ready for full membership on economic grounds.

Diplomats said Malaysia and Indonesia were believed to be in favour of quickly admitting Burma into the fold, perhaps next year along with Cambodia and Laos, and that they expected the issue to be thrashed out at Saturday's summit.

Burmese leader General Than Shwe is to attend the meeting, building on contacts in the group following a visit to Malaysia earlier this year.

Diplomats played down suggestions of sharp differences within the usually united ASEAN group. "ASEAN is very cautious but never backwards," said one. "It does have to go through debate in reaching a consensus. It takes time, but it has its own merits."

The leaders at the summit, who represent some of the fastest growing nations in the world, were also likely to finalise a common stand to be taken at the inaugural meeting of the World Trade Organisation in Singapore next month, diplomats said.

They said much of their position will flow from decisions taken at the APEC summit, which was attended by all ASEAN members except Vietnam.

World
Burma
Clinton's
criticisms
BANGKOK (R) — A senior Burmese government official Wednesday dismissed comments by U.S. President Bill Clinton criticising the military government for failing to restore democracy to the country.
"We don't really have any comment on what he said," said the official, who read a transcript of the speech Mr. Clinton delivered at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University Tuesday.
"They have been saying this for years, there's nothing new in his speech," he said in a telephone interview from Rangoon.
In a speech praising most Asia-Pacific nations for their efforts to bring democracy to the region, Mr. Clinton singled out Burma for its failure to recognise a democratically elected government, saying it showed Rangoon had no rule of law.
Mr. Clinton, on a brief visit to Thailand, also criticised Burma for being the world's number one opium and heroin producer.
"The role of drugs in Burma's economic and political life and the regime's refusal to honour its own pledge to move to multi-party democracy are really two sides of the same coin, for both represent the absence of the rule of law," he said.
"Every nation has an interest in promoting true political dialogue in Burma — a dialogue that will lead to a real fight against crime, corruption and narcotics and a government more acceptable to its people," Mr. Clinton said.
Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party won a landslide victory in a 1990 general election, but the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) never recognised the results of the poll.
Ms. Suu Kyi, who was under house arrest during the election, has made repeated unanswered calls since her release last year for the SLORC to recognise the poll results or at least open talks with the NLD on how to bring democracy to Burma.
Burma's military rulers have also been accused by the United Nations and others of human rights abuses and for suppressing basic freedoms.
In a series of crackdowns on the democracy movement, the SLORC has arrested and released nearly 1,000 NLD members or supporters since May for trying to hold meetings.
Burmese exile groups based in Bangkok, many of which had written to Mr. Clinton urging him to speak out on Burma during his visit to Asia, applauded the president for raising the profile of Burma's problems.
But they said more needed to be done, and noted that Mr. Clinton had stopped short of taking a strong stance.
"This is the first step, having the U.S. here," said Zaw Min, a spokesman for the all Burma student's democratic front, whose members fled Burma during the 1988 pro-democracy demonstrations that the military crushed.
"It is a positive step, although he didn't mention very strongly what they would do," he told Reuters.
Washington has slapped a visa ban on senior SLORC officials and has passed legislation allowing Mr. Clinton to impose economic sanctions if repression in Burma worsens or if Ms. Suu Kyi is re-arrested.
Some democracy activists have said the recent SLORC crackdown on the NLD should be enough to warrant the imposition of sanctions.
Comoran P
POLICE were Wednesday still holding two suspected of being involved in the hijacking of a Comorian airline plane, though the airline has paid the two of responsibility.
The commander of the police, gendarmerie, and the Ministry of the Interior, Mohamed Ali, said the two would not be released until they had given a statement to the police.
The two were taken to the police station after the hijacking of the plane on Monday.
The hijacking of the plane was the first of its kind in the history of the Comoros.
The plane was carrying 20 passengers and 10 crew members.
The hijackers demanded a ransom of 100,000 dollars.
The Comorian government has offered a reward of 10,000 dollars for information leading to the capture of the hijackers.
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Lukashenko's power grab sets off alarm bells abroad

MINSK (Agencies) — Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko's power grab has outmanoeuvred the opposition and raised concern about how he plans to use his virtually unassailable authority in the ex-Soviet republic.

Some western diplomats are now asking how much further Mr. Lukashenko will go, after he bypassed opposition from parliament, the constitutional court and the central electoral commission to boost his already considerable powers.

"Just three months ago I did not believe he was dangerous, but now I've changed my mind," one diplomat admitted, asking not to be named.



Political opponents and human rights activists have accused the 42-year-old president of creating a dictatorship on the back of a landslide victory in a controversial referendum Sunday which boosted his powers.

About 100 pro-Lukashenko deputies broke away from the Belarus parliament, still called the supreme Soviet, and set up a new assembly Tuesday, declaring the old parliament defunct.

Mr. Lukashenko's strong-arm tactics have raised fears in Europe that a new dictatorship may have emerged in this republic of 10 million inhabitants, sandwiched between Russia and Poland.

"A black mountain has risen up in the centre of Europe," said deputy Viktor Gonchar, a former ally of Mr. Lukashenko, but now one of his most outspoken opponents.

The United States "is not going to be able to have a normal, positive relationship with a government that is fundamentally anti-democratic," state department spokesman Nicholas Burns said, commenting on Mr. Lukashenko's power grab.

The new constitution, endorsed by a landslide majority in Mr. Lukashenko's referendum, does not provide any real counterweight to the Belarus president, a former Communist apparition collective farm boss who came to power in July 1994.

Mr. Lukashenko can now have the final say in the

A deputy in the alternative Belarusian Parliament raises his arm to speak while President Alexander Lukashenko looks on during a session of the Parliament in Minsk. More and more deputies loyal to Mr. Lukashenko moved from the Belarusian Parliament to the alternative pro-presidential one, after the President won an overwhelming victory in a controversial referendum Sunday (Reuters photo)

composition of a new two-chamber parliament, the constitutional court and electoral commission.

"He is on the verge of gaining what he wanted — total power," said one diplomat.

Mr. Lukashenko has repeatedly insisted that there are no grounds to talk of a dictatorship in Belarus.

But he said his referendum, denounced as illegal by the opposition, was aimed at ensuring "order and discipline."

Belarus does not have prisoners of conscience, and trade unions, political parties and demonstrations are tolerated.

However, the authorities have intimidated the opposition, muzzling the press, and some newspapers have appeared with blank spaces where the censors have exercised politically incorrect opinions.

Several Belarusian newspapers are now printed in neighbouring Lithuania.

According to Sergei Kol'yakin, leader of the Communist parliamentary group, Mr. Lukashenko's "main enemy is the economy," and he predicts that a return to a command economy will bring ruin and chaos.

Mr. Lukashenko's Soviet-style interference in market processes has already led to

food stocks running lower and lower in Belarusian shops and a much slower pace of reform than in neighbouring Poland or Russia.

The risk is that Mr. Lukashenko, a populist who uses stridently pro-Moscow and anti-NATO rhetoric, will use the West as a scapegoat for the country's economic ills, one diplomat said.

The European Union has adopted a softer public stance toward Mr. Lukashenko than that of the United States, perhaps aware that nothing would be gained by isolating Belarus.

Another question marks hangs over Mr. Lukashenko's project to reintegrate his country with Russia, the Slav big brother which dominated Belarus from the end of the 18th century to the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

Some opposition critics have even suggested that Mr. Lukashenko harbours long-term plans to enter the Kremlin in the event of reunification with Russia.

In April the two countries signed a far-reaching union treaty envisaging the creation of supra-national bodies and a host of other areas of cooperation, setting a precedent in Moscow's relations with other former Soviet republics.

The Belarus constitutional court insisted Wednesday

that Mr. Lukashenko's referendum was only consultative, rejecting his claim that it was legally binding.

The constitutional court chairman sent a letter to Mr. Lukashenko reiterating its ruling last week that the referendum was only consultative, court spokesman Oleg Maskhalov said.

Meanwhile, the new assembly of pro-Lukashenko deputies adopted a law Wednesday to make the referendum result legally binding — a move denounced by the old parliament as unconstitutional.

Meanwhile, a council of Europe delegation officially pronounced illegitimate Wednesday the results of a referendum in Belarus which gave President Alexander Lukashenko sweeping powers.

A committee from the Pan-European body, set up after World War II to promote human rights and democracy, said in a statement released at a news conference that it was impossible "to reach a positive conclusion as to the democratic legitimacy of the referendum and its results."

Appealing to Mr. Lukashenko to respect parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, the statement expressed concern that the way a new legislature was being formed "might deprive the Belarusian parliament of its legitimacy."

Russia to pull out last Chechenya troops by Jan. 25

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's defence ministry will start pulling out its last troops from breakaway Chechenya on Dec. 1 and the withdrawal will end by Jan. 25, the eve of planned elections there, Interfax news agency said Wednesday.

The decision follows a pledge made by President Boris Yeltsin last week to withdraw Russia's two remaining units from the region, where Moscow failed to defeat separatists in a 21-month-long bloody war.

Interfax, quoting an unnamed source in the army's general staff, said the remaining troops numbered about 6,000. The ministry

will also remove 2,000 armoured vehicles, four tonnes of supplies and 400 tonnes of military equipment, it added.

Russia has already withdrawn the bulk of its troops from Chechenya following an Aug. 31 peace treaty that deferred a decision on the region's final political status for five years.

But Moscow had wanted to leave two units permanently in Chechenya — one from the defence ministry and another from the interior ministry.

Mr. Yeltsin's surprise announcement that they would also be withdrawn sparked anger among his Communist and nationalist

opponents in the State Duma lower house of parliament.

They plan to hold an extraordinary parliamentary session Friday to discuss the issue, arguing that by withdrawing the troops Mr. Yeltsin is sanctioning Chechen independence.

They have threatened to try to impeach Mr. Yeltsin — a long drawn-out procedure which has little chance of success — or to call for a no-confidence vote in the government.

The brigade being withdrawn will be stationed in the southern Russian city of Budennovsk, where scores of people were killed in June last year when Che-

chen rebels took hostages at a local hospital.

The incident forced Moscow to negotiate a ceasefire with the rebels in Chechenya, where tens of thousands of people, mostly civilians, had been killed since Russian troops were sent into the region in December 1994.

Elections to set up a post-war administration in Chechenya are scheduled for Jan. 27.

Chechen separatist leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev has already said he plans to run for the presidency and other candidates are likely to surface after the official launch of the election campaign Wednesday.

Patten defends Hong Kong subversion bill move

TOKYO (R) — Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten Wednesday defended his government's move to introduce a new anti-subversion bill before the colony's return to China and lashed out at Beijing for refusing dialogue on the issue.

"Very reluctantly, we decided that we would need to go ahead to honour our commitment to Hong Kong," Gov. Patten, who is in Tokyo on a six-day visit, told a news conference.

He is in Japan to attend a business seminar and to discuss with Japanese political and business leaders the colony's future before and after its handover to China next year.

Britain took steps Tuesday to bring in a pre-emptive new law on subversion ahead of Hong Kong's 1997 return, laying down legal markers defining the con-

cepts of treason, sedition, subversion and secession in a bid to head off jarrings of dissidents after Beijing takes over the colony.

Chinese officials in Hong Kong immediately attacked the move and pro-China politicians said the law would probably be erased and replaced after China resumes sovereignty at midnight next June 30.

"We've been discussing for 17 months — 17 months — with Chinese officials on this issue and frankly, by and large, Chinese officials have refused to enter into a dialogue," Gov. Patten said.

He said nothing in the joint declaration between Britain and China prohibited translating what is common law in Britain into the language of international law. He said the breach of the agreement came from China, which recently an-

nounced it was sending up a provisional legislature.

"People living in glass houses should be careful of lobbying bricks around," Gov. Patten said.

A spokesman for China's de-facto embassy in Hong Kong said that Britain would have to take responsibility for all the consequences of amending the law.

Commenting on Beijing's reaction, Gov. Patten said: "There were no questions whatsoever (from China) about the details of what we were proposing."

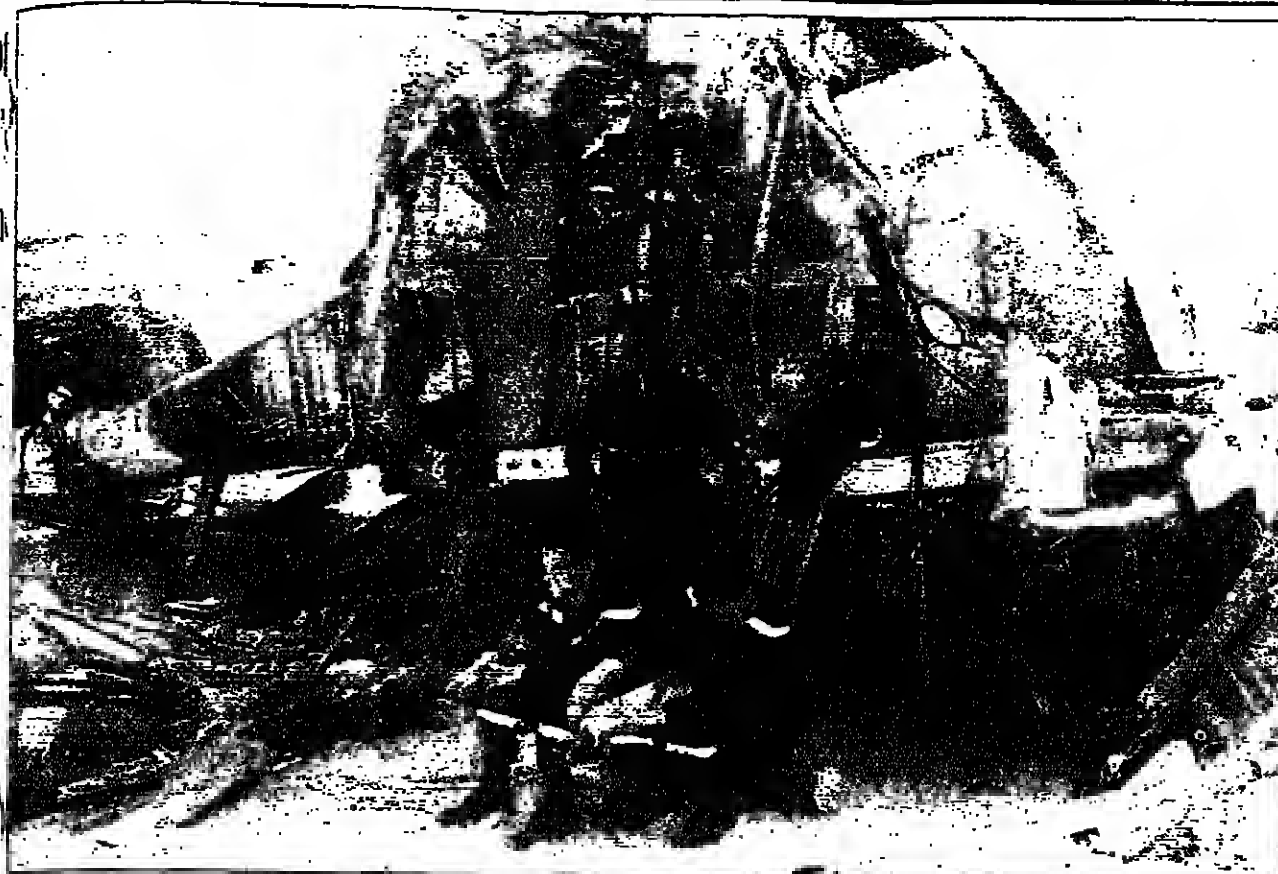
"It's curious that rather than say what is wrong, we continue to get propaganda," he said.

He told Japanese business leaders during a meeting earlier Wednesday that Hong Kong's success was due to its deregulation policies and free market.

"I hope you (Japan) will stay interested and diplomatically supportive of the maintenance of Hong Kong as a bridge between China and the rest of the world, as a free society under the rule of law," Gov. Patten said.

Gov. Patten said he was "cautiously optimistic" about Hong Kong after the 1997 revision, and expressed confidence in the people of Hong Kong and its civic institutions to maintain the freedom and economic prosperity of the territory.

Gov. Patten also pressed Tokyo to afford Hong Kong's post-1997 passport preferential treatment over mainland Chinese passports.



French soldiers take time off after sawing off part of an Ethiopian airliner. Fifty two of the 175 passengers and crew in the Ethiopian airliner survived when the hijacked plane crashed in the Comoru Islands (Reuters photo)

Comoran police are still holding 2 hijack suspects

MORONI, Comoru Islands (R) — Police were Wednesday still holding two men suspected of being involved in the hijacking of an Ethiopian Airlines plane even though the airline has absolved the two of responsibility.

The commander of the Comoru Islands gendarmerie, Ismael Mognidaho, who is leading the investigation, said he would not bow to pressure to release the two, a Kenyan and a Djibouti national.

"We arrested these two people after having cross-checked the accounts of a number of survivors," he told Reuters.

The Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 767 was hijacked Saturday as it flew from Addis Ababa to Nairobi. The plane ran out of fuel and crashed into the sea off the Comoros, an archipelago 300 kilometres east of the African mainland. Fifty of the 175 passen-

gers and crew survived. The other 125 are dead or presumed dead. By Tuesday evening 121 bodies had been recovered.

The two men detained by police were identified by some of the survivors as being two of the three hijackers.

However, the co-pilot, Yonas Mekuria, who was beaten up by the hijackers, said they were not the culprits.

In the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian police issued a statement declaring their innocence.

"The Kenyan and the Djibouti nationals who are in custody in Comoru Islands were not involved in the hijacking and the accident of the Boeing 767 Ethiopian Airlines plane Saturday," it said. "They are innocent passengers."

Mr. Mekuria and another surviving crew member have been ordered to remain in the Comoros to help with the investigation.

Kenya's Daily Nation newspaper Wednesday named the Kenyan as businessman Michael Odenyo, who had initially been listed as one of the people who died in the crash.

The newspaper said his family only found out he was alive and being held at a police station by a circuitous route.

A Kenyan trying to telephone the Comoros on an unrelated business got through to the police station. Mr. Odenyo heard a police officer mention Kenya and asked to speak to the caller.

The caller then rang the Central Bank of Kenya, where Odenyo's wife works, and the good news was finally relayed to her by a colleague.

"The past three days have been traumatic and a miracle has happened for which I thank God," Mr. Odenyo's mother told the newspaper. His father has now gone

to Moroni, the Comoran capital, and the family believes Mr. Odenyo will be released as soon as the father confirms his son's identity.

Only two of the bodies recovered from the wreckage had left the island by Tuesday evening. The rest remain in a makeshift morgue that used to be a meat importer's cold storage room.

The small country of about half a million people was struggling to cope with the aftermath of the tragedy. "These people, who had been unexpectedly highly efficient in carrying out the rescue operation within a short space of time, are not actually up to the job of coordination of the whole process," said a local official.

Investigation and evacuation, said a foreign diplomat, here "to evacuate a body," told Reuters.

Breakaway Khmer Rouge military commanders resign

PHNOM PENH (R) — The two top commanders of breakaway Khmer Rouge divisions in Cambodia's northwest have resigned to devote their attention to politics, officials said Wednesday.

Ei Chien, commander of Division 415 in Pailin, and Sok Pheap, Division 450 commander in Phnom Malai, would now devote their time to the Democratic National United Movement (DNUM), an organisation started by breakaway leader Ieng Sary, an aide to Sok Pheap told Reuters.

"My commander Sok Pheap is not the divisional commander of 450 any more, as he has joined with DNUM, led by Ieng Sary," the aide to Sok Pheap said from Phnom Malai. He said Sok Pheap's deputy, Hiri Phoo, would replace him as commander.

Em Mara, an official at the defence ministry, confirmed that Ei Chien had stepped down. He said Ei Chien, who has identified himself in the past as vice chairman of DNUM, would be replaced by his deputy commander, Chhun Nhep. The officials were vague

about the date of the resignations, but said they believed they took place around Nov. 6, the day the commanders merged their troops with government forces.

Long Norin, an advisor to Ieng Sary, told Reuters he believed the resignations happened on Nov. 6.

Political analysts said the resignations came as a surprise, and that it was not yet clear if it signalled greater political involvement for the former commanders or whether it meant they would be taking on posts in the government army.

General elections in Cambodia are set for 1998.

"This could allow them to maintain the military wing of their movement through loyal deputies while strengthening the political wing of their movement," said one analyst.

Long Norin denied any political ambitions for the movement, insisting it was not a political party and only existed to "educate our members and our nation about reconciliation."

Ieng Sary, foreign minister during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-1979 reign of

terror, broke with hardliners of the Maoist guerrilla movement in August and founded DNUM.

Ieng Sary, who was pardoned in September for his role in the genocidal regime and whose troops believed to number up to 4,000, joined the government earlier this month, has described DNUM as a neutral movement that seeks peace with the government.

Government officials said they did not know what the roles of Sok Pheap and Ei Chien would be in DNUM.

Co-premiers Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen have tried to recruit Khmer Rouge defectors to their own parties during a period of increasing tension between the coalition leaders as they begin to position themselves ahead of the 1998 elections.

The Khmer Rouge, whose regime left more than one million Cambodians dead, have been crippled by mass defections in recent months. The guerrilla group reneged on a U.N.-sponsored peace pact in 1991 and have been fighting the coalition government.

Khan sees bright future in Pakistan politics

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Former Pakistani cricket hero Imran Khan vowed a spirited solo battle by his nascent political party in the next national election, in an interview published here Wednesday.

"We will make no alliance with others, ours will be a solo fight," Mr. Khan said of the Tehreek-e-Insaf (Movement for Justice) he launched about nine months ago at the start of his political career.

The next polls, due on Feb. 3, will be the "most stormy" in Pakistan's history, Mr. Khan told domestic news agency NNI.

The manifesto of his party focuses on social justice, good governance and elimination of political and administrative corruption.

Mr. Khan predicted electoral failure for the mainstream parties, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of ousted Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Pakistan Muslim League of her archrival Nawaz Sharif, also a former premier.

"Both have already been tested by the nation," he said.

Singling out PPP, he forecast that Ms. Bhutto's party would be "wiped out" in the elections.

Mr. Khan enjoys personal popularity due to his cricket exploits and his humanitarian work in raising a modern cancer hospital with the help of public donations, but his fledgling party is still in an organisational phase.

In a country where politicians are a suspect lot widely accused of corruption, Mr. Khan has a moral advantage with his name untainted by any corruption scandal.

Sri Lanka heads for polls in war zone

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka Wednesday announced local elections in the island's battle-scarred northern regions for the first time in 13 years in a bid to revive civil administration in the area, officials here said.

Elections commissioner Dayananda Dissanayake said nominations will open on Dec. 11 to elect members to 27 municipal, urban and village councils in four districts. The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were dominating large parts of the northern province, but the area under their control was reduced considerably following military operations launched

last year. Elections Chief Dissanayake said the main council up for grabs will be Jaffna municipality, the main local authority in the north of the country. Tamil Tiger guerrillas were driven out of the area last year.

"These will be the first local elections in the areas since 1983," Chief Dissanayake said. He said balloting that was to be held in 1987 had been postponed since then because of security considerations.

Under election laws, the latest vote must be conducted between the end of January and early February and the exact date is expected to be announced on Dec. 17.

The government has said that it wants a local Tamil leadership to emerge in Jaffna to take over the rehabilitation of the embattled region where most civilian duties are now supervised by the military.

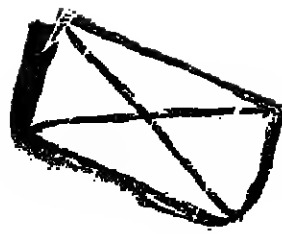
Although the government made the surprise announcement of the vote in the north, local council elections in the rest of the country have been postponed three times till April next year.

The government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga last year postponed the local bodies' election by one year with the agreement of the main opposition and later twice by using tough emergency regulations.

We

THE MAKING OF DIPLOMACY

Crown Prince, as a Diplomat at Jordan as a memorandum of understanding between the ID, representatives from the ID, and the Department of Strategic Studies (ACSS) resident Ali Nasser M. Al-Fayez, who is a multi-functional institution research and studies conditions focusing on chance and improve exchange of information international situation on advisor to the strategic, the ID and the ACSS in a wider context to perspective on various factors of the ID is to scholars and others with relations. Other journal and international establishing a database. Similarly, the search which fits the ACSS programme of activities and academic centres. Politiques 1, compense in Madrid, publication with George J. D., and the Vienna University ID is a corporate initiative, the International (Barham House), and ACSS adds weight to the research in Amman. The coming ceremony Mr. Hussein had donated constructing a building branch. Meanwhile, group would involve itself such as the two which building last week responded that the American artist Lilly E. Murphy of the Arab Academy is very pleased to have a pre-eminent of international may appear outside they actually do fit in their own appreciation serve them us future



Society on the Move

Promoting Jordan is the order of the day

HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, will meet today at the Higher Council for Science and Technology with a large group of private and semi-government sector representatives in coordinate Jordan's participation at an important international forum. Prince Hassan will be top billed next week among current and former prime ministers from Mauritius to Israel, ministers from Hong Kong to Chile, multinational businessmen from the Netherlands to the U.K. and CNN talk show host Larry King at the annual Global Panel conference at the Hague, to discuss this year's theme "The Need for a Grand Design: Multiple Perspectives on a Changing World," with a special session on Jordan. Scheduled to take place Tuesday and Wednesday at the Hague in the Netherlands, the conference will have a special session on Wednesday night and Thursday in Aachen, Germany. Global Panel is a conference during which international developments in the political, economic, and social spheres are discussed at the highest level by opinion leaders and decision-makers. The organizer of the panel is the European Research Centre (ERC), an independent Dutch organization with international experience. For eight consecutive years, the panel has proved to be an inspiring meeting place for business people, politicians, and academics. It is supported by the international business community, the Dutch government, and the European Union. Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade Anneke van Dijk-van Woele acts as president of Global Panel. The organization has hosted, among other dignitaries, His Majesty King Hussein, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, former U.S. Presidents Jimmy Carter and George Bush, former President of the former Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, Argentine President Carlos Menem, President Robert Mugabe of Kenya and former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

This year Global Panel will host among others President of Mauritius Cassam Uteem, Prime Minister of Malaysia Dr. Mahathir Ben Mohammad, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and former Prime Minister of Netherlands Ruud Lubbers. With the special country-oriented session on "Jordan: Gateway to the Middle East and North Africa," the Jordanian team accompanying the Crown Prince includes a large group of businessmen. The Jordanian participation is seen in terms of the Kingdom being a major regional player in the global economy, and as having a key role in establishing and maintaining regional peace and security. What the business team will try to impress upon other conference attendees is that through continuing economic growth and low inflation, Jordan seeks to promote foreign investment, joint ventures, and policies of technology transfer in major industrial sectors such as agriculture, machinery, chemicals and pharmaceuticals. They will also highlight the priority given to conserving and expanding water resources. Needless to say, tourism and infrastructure will figure high on the Jordan agenda.

THE MAKING OF DIPLOMATS: With the blessing of the Crown Prince, as initiator and chairman of the Institute for Diplomacy (ID), academicians also are looking at Jordan as a gateway to their interests. The memorandum of understanding signed this week between the ID, represented by its President Dr. Mazen Arnaout, and the Damascus-based Arab Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS), headed by former Yemeni President Ali Nasser Mohammad, works to enhance the mandates of both organizations is several ways. As a multi-functional institute the ID aims basically to conduct research and studies, solely and jointly with other institutions focusing on international affairs, in order to enhance and improve Jordan's external communication and exchange of information in the fields of strategic and international studies. Here, Dr. Arnaout, who is also an advisor to the Crown Prince, explains that by strategic, the ID and other like institutes look at strategic in a wider context than the earlier and narrower perspective on various forms of national security. But the priority of the ID is to graduate qualified, well-rounded diplomats and others working in the field of international relations. Other functions include conducting national and international conferences and seminars and establishing a database on Jordanian external relations. Similarly, the ACC has a basic function of research which fits the ID's think-tank function. The ID's programme of affiliation has brought it together with numerous institutes and centres for research, training and academic involvement, such as Institut des Sciences Politiques (Science PO) and Universidad Complutense in Madrid. The institute is looking into affiliation with Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and the Vienna Diplomatic Academy. Meanwhile the ID is a corporate member of two London-based institutes, the International Institute of Strategic Studies (Chatham House), and Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). The memorandum between the ID and the ACCSS adds weight to the Damascus centre's forthcoming presence in Amman. The centre, in fact, will establish a branch in Amman, as well as in Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. Mr. Mohammad announced during the signing ceremony Monday that His Majesty King Hussein had donated a plot of land for the purpose of constructing a building to house the ACC's Amman branch. Meanwhile, questions were raised as to why the ID would involve itself in organising cultural exhibitions as the two which ran simultaneously at the ID building last week. To those queries Dr. Arnaout responded that the exhibition of photos by Arab-American artist Lilly Bandoq and the exhibition of calligraphy of the Arab and Islamic worlds are events the ID is very pleased to host because they carry the important ingredient of inter-cultural communication, plus they have a regional flavour. "Although on the outset they may appear outside the domain of the ID's work, they actually do fit in and help our students enhance their own appreciation of arts and culture which will serve them as future diplomats."



Jordan Tourism and Hotel Company Chairman Khalil Talhoumi (right) and InterContinental President for the Middle East and Africa Raymond Khalife sign a contract renewal for the continued management of the Jordan InterContinental Hotel (photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

PROVING THEM WRONG:

Already having served as a diplomat, Khalil Othman, it would appear, has some rather potent powers of persuasion. When he was first appointed as an inspector of the United Nations Specialised Agencies in Geneva, U.N. authorities were at the time about to shut down the unit. But a paper presented by Dr. Othman in which he was critical of some aspects of the U.N. administrative departments prompted officials to prolong the life of the unit. Four years and two re-elections later, Dr. Othman has just begun his third two-year term, and he is vice-chairman of the unit. In his early 50s, Dr. Othman received his Ph.D. in political economics at the London School of Economics. He began his career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was posted to Jordan's embassy in London and to the Kingdom's mission at the United Nations in New York. Hailing from Beit Safafa, a town partitioned between Israel and Jordan after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and now part of Greater Jerusalem, Dr. Othman later made a career change to the U.N. starting with a post at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kuwait then afterwards in the former Yugoslavia. He returned to Amman and continued with the UNDP. Dr. Othman is married to Hind Al Khatib who works as a consultant in children's affairs for the U.N. Although he returns to Jordan periodically for visits, it is expected that after this two-year term he will be back in Jordan for good.



Khalil Othman

WHAT A DEAL! Another appointment of a son has been sealed back here in Amman. Jordan Hotel and Tourism Company (JHTC) invited officials of the InterContinental Hotel chain to a dinner last night at which a contract renewal document was signed calling for the continuation of InterContinental management of the landmark hotel until the year 2007. The amended contract stipulates that InterContinental has agreed to reduce its management fees from 3 per cent of gross revenue and 15 per cent of gross operating profit to 2 per cent of gross revenue and 10 per cent of gross operating profit. In return the JHTC agreed to go ahead with the renovation and expansion of the hotel and add 125 rooms, bringing the total to 500. Other alterations will include 200 new parking spaces, a new health club, and indoor swimming pool, expansion of the present ballroom from a 1,000-person capacity to 1,400, a new indoor-outdoor banquet facility to accommodate 800 people, a new Lebanese restaurant, a new all-day dining restaurant, a new shopping mall of 25-26 shops, an entire floor of meeting rooms, and of course the renovation and upgrading of kitchen facilities. The company will award the contract for the 125 rooms next week. The hotel facade will get a facelift and the lifts will be upgraded. What was expected by some in terms of a new contract was different in light of all the talk of privatising the country's wholly and partially government-owned establishments, among them the Jordan InterContinental. But it was JHTC Chairman Khalil Talhoumi, who many were counting on to purchase the balance of the hotel's government shares through his company Zara, and President for InterContinental Hotels in the Middle East and Africa Raymond Khalife,

who signed the contract. According to Mr. Talhoumi, negotiations for the purchase of the remaining government shares are in progress, and Zara is in the picture. Personally, he would like to see the government continue as a shareholder, but if policy dictates that privatisation is the way, then the JHTC has no problem with that. The InterContinental began managing this Jabal Amman hotel in 1963 upon request of the Jordanian government, and has been doing so ever since. According to Mr. Khalife, InterContinental does not see itself as merely a manager but considers itself a partner with the hotel, as its success is InterCon's success. About 50 people including ministers, businessmen and the press attended last night's dinner.

HUSH, HE MIGHT HERE YOU: One night earlier on Tuesday after principals from the hospitality industry gathered for an event of pageantry. But with the number of hoteliers attending as newly inducted members of the Chaine des Rotisseurs (that 13th century French-burn association of gastronomy) and guests, there was much talk of the down-turn in tourism in 1996. Fortunately the complaints were not made within earshot of Minister of Tourism Saleh Irshaidat who was seated at the table of honour with their Royal Highnesses Prince Ali Bin Nayef, Princess Wijdan, and their daughters Princesses Rajwa and Basma. "But Mövenpick Resort General Manager in Petra Robert Fierz was undeterred, his career in the industry has taken him to some rather "hot spots" of the world and he has somehow managed to maintain good humour and optimism about the prospects of turning a bad season into a boom season. Meanwhile the Chaine has opened its Jordan Chapter with Regency Palace hotelier Said Sawalha as president, and its Paris-based President Robert Pary commented that he was particularly delighted to have Jordan join this august assemblage as it was one of the few countries that could count a queen among its members — Her Majesty Queen Noor is honorary member. Among the other members in various categories are head of the chapter and Royal Jordanian Vice President for Investments Akel Biltaji, Diana Ghaleb, Samir and Nabih Sawalha (all connected to the hotel industry in some way) and Adnan Habbo of Royal Jordanian.

PRIVATE SCREENING: Those most responsible for promoting tourism in Jordan were testing a new product Wednesday. At the Ministry of Tourism a small group of concerned persons was invited to review rough copies of a film produced to promote Jordan as a tourism destination. The production was a joint effort between the Italian film-producing company called Filmgo and a local counter-part called Katy Film. What was shown were a 10-minute track, five short spots, and a 12-minute track omitting the script. Critique first complimented the professionalism, quality and technical skill reflected in the films which were shot on 16 mm film rather than poorer quality video. But then it moved to small yet important points, particularly the apparent over-emphasis on Beduin life and other scenes that a tourist may be attracted to but may never actually experience on a trip to the Kingdom. While recognising and acknowledging the points being made, Filmgo representative Renata Turadini took note of what could or should be altered, but also did a good job of defending the work of the films' director in having an eye and ear for a more physical sense of beauty, excitement and novelty that would sell to the target European and Southeast Asian tourist. So it is not exactly "back to the drawing board" but perhaps a few days of review, editing, piecing in and correcting and then a new screening. We will be waiting.

SO WHERE'S THE HOST? With the representative of the European Delegation in Jordan Yves Guzzo, taking time out for entertainment is part of the job. Mr. Guzzo had a full house Sunday at the Prince Hassan Auditorium for the European Union Chamber Orchestra Concert. A plumb by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, was printed in the local press, showing an empty chair between HRH Princess Ali Faisal, who attended on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Noor, and Hanan Gharni, wife of University of Jordan President Fawzi Gharni. Protocol seating would have placed Mr. Guzzo in that vacant seat, but the photo led some who did not attend the concert to presume that Mr. Guzzo was indeed not there. But alas, he was. It is just that the photo was taken when Mr. Guzzo was on stage making introductions. Still the EU representative had been travelling and had arrived back in Amman in the nick of time to make the concert. His earlier journey took him in France, and not Japan as was previously rumored. He went in say good-bye to his eldest son Alexis who was leaving for Morocco where he would be doing his military/civil service. Mr. Guzzo then headed to Brussels on business before returning in Amman. He had noticed the omission from the Petra photo, but understood.

MEDIA MOVES: At a seminar last night organised by the Arab Club for Culture and Art journalists took up the subject of what could be considered a "press drain," the "Arab Media Abroad." Taking part in this seminar were journalists from two London-based Arabic dailies, Mufeed Awad from Sharq Al Awsat and Salameh Ne'mati from Al Haya. Fawzi Bandari, from the Paris-based weekly Al Wata' Al Arabi, was scheduled on the programme as well but ended up a no-show. Moderated by Mohammad Sharif Jayousi, a member of the club, the two journalists attempted to explain what some view as the "voyage" of Arab journalism, while others see it as the "defection" of Arab newspapers to the west. They spoke about why such papers decided to publish outside the Arab World, and more specifically what political, economic and logistical conditions may have motivated such a move.

PRESS PARTY: On the home front the Foreign Press Club, headed by Agence France Presse Amman Bureau Chief Randa Habib, will host a reception on Dec. 5 at the Philadelphia Hotel on the occasion of establishing the club for foreign correspondents in Jordan. The club's members were ineligible for membership in the Jordan Press Association, and thus were prompted, along with other reasons, to form their own grouping. Although activity in the Foreign Press Club has been unhurried at best, the hosting of next week's reception may help to get the ball rolling say members and local hacks.

BACK TO SHIHAN: One journalist who is not a member of the Foreign Press Club, simply by virtue of working for a strictly local tabloid, is Raja Talab. Mr. Talab, 32, has become editor-in-chief of Shihan weekly, replacing Jihad Momani who bolted to Al Bilad where he became publisher Nayef Tarvata's partner. Mr. Talab has served as managing editor of the naughty tabloid from 1991 to 1994. He then moved to another weekly, Al Bilad, as chief editor, then moved again to Al Hadeth weekly where he shared the title of deputy editor with Nidal Mansour. Mr. Talab intends to change policy at Shihan, but not in the direction of becoming a partisan paper. He believes that when he managed the paper earlier there were better scoops and wider coverage. He thinks he can do it again. Mr. Talab said he prefers weeklies for the "ceiling of freedom" they offer. He also believes that Shihan's street influence is nothing to sneeze at. And, besides, his position offers a better remuneration package. In the meantime, he owns 10 per cent of Al Hadeth and intends to keep them for the time being.

HEALTH ADVANCES: Over at the Aroha Centre for Heart and Special Surgery, Dr. Daoud Hanania last week invited another guest surgeon to lecture on special surgical procedures and perform related operations on several of the hospital's patients. The surgeon in question is Dr. Randal Batista of Brazil, who described a new procedure for end-stage heart disease patients, that is, those people with intractable heart failure and who are usually offered little hope other than undergoing a human heart transplant operation. Dr. Batista's procedure involves reducing the size of the heart in the left ventricle, thus "helping to prolong the quality and length of life of the patient." The success of this operation is rendering it acceptable now in most countries of the world, said Dr. Hanania, who first saw Dr. Batista's work about three years ago in Boston. While he was in Jordan, Dr. Batista conducted six operations: there were five Jordanian patients and one Yemeni patient. Their ages ranged from 14 to 60. One patient died following surgery; the other five are recovering "quite well." The Brazilian surgeon was assisted by a team of Jordanian specialists led by Dr. Hanania. This same Jordanian team will now be conducting this procedure, where indicated. Dr. Batista also conducted another "revolutionary" procedure called auto-transplantation, on a Jordanian woman. It involved removing the heart, doing the necessary [repair], and then re-implanting it.

Jennifer Hamareh

RENDEZVOUS WITH ART

'Old curiosity shop' puts pride back in our cultural heritage

Quite a bit more than a cosy and genial corner shop, Al Aydi Craft Development Centre is a cultural-preservation project with a social conscience, ushering a renaissance in Jordanian artisanship through a programme of human development

By Mahmoud I. Mufti

"SINCE TIME began, Man has felt the need to enrich his world aesthetically. Ways of achieving this have varied, but Man slowly began to shape things around him to fit his own needs and ideas. On this great land, generation after generation of people have not only lived but have also contributed and excelled in their contributions towards beautifying their everyday surroundings. Their greatness is witnessed everywhere in this beautiful country.

The glory of the past has acted as an inspiration for the present, for this land — inspiring men to produce the sculptural forms of Petra, the columns of Jerash, and the desert castles — is still enkindling its people to create," comments former Jordanian ambassador, Laurie Hlass.

Recognising the aesthetic reserves and creative talents abounding in Jordan, a small but dedicated band of women sought to harness and promote — starting in the early 70s — these national treasures that are embedded in our cultural heritage. Though from different walks of life and possessing of different talents, those individuals shared a vision for cultural preservation and promotion through a programme of human development that would truly bring out the full lustre of what Jordanian craft can offer, benefiting the craftsmen themselves, placing Jordan on the world-map of fine artisanship — and perhaps, most importantly — contributing to the renaissance of a once-more-prevalent and tragic stigma associated with anything local (while longingly looking to imported objects of art as, virtually, the sole "home-beautifiers").

Engendering this pioneering effort was the Beirut College for Women's (BUC) Alumni Club of Amman. Mrs. Abba Kassar was its president, and Mrs. Janet Said Al Mufti its vice president. Members included her Royal Highness Princess Widad Ali, Ms. Hind Nasser, Ms. Nujud Fawzi, Ms. Zeena Rodenko, Mrs. Widad Kassar, among others. The club launched off with a flurry of intense and topical cultural activities, even though it had very few members at the time, compared to about 500 now. "Our activities were really of a relatively massive scale," says co-founder Mrs. Widad Kassar, "quite disproportionate to our number and institutional infrastructure. Nonetheless, each time new members joined, year by year, our efforts were invigorated and our resolve strengthened. While pushing our programmes through with vigour, we nevertheless almost always maintained a keen eye as to where we held such events; not anywhere would do. Recognising the value of 'location-specific symbolism' and the

promotional value it could potentially generate, we selected the old Amman Municipality building in the downtown (near the Roman Amphitheatre). Our anticipation was met with actual results: many people gathered there, and the functions became synonymous with our first taste of success. Successive perks of this nature followed, playing an instrumental role in infusing us with the self-confidence we needed — both as individuals and as a whole — and in demonstrating to us the critical importance of working as a team, coordinating everything together."

The club's lecture-themes ranged from economics, antiquities, the mayorship of Amman, etc. Meeting with virtually runaway success and public support of their programmes, the members found themselves well-poised to start conceiving of an educational programme, whereby they would send students to college, since it was always the understanding that every alumni branch of the BUC would assist students in Lebanon. Accordingly, they started forwarding tuition-fees to Beirut to cover the scholarship-expenses of a number of students enrolling at the BUC (initially known as Junior College, then the BUC, and currently the Beirut College for Women). And so came into being one of Beirut's/Lebanon's first alumni clubs, preceded only by the likes of the well-established and formidable American University of Beirut's alumni association, then headed by Mr. Farid Al Sa'ad.

With the passage of time, the club-members felt that although they would not altogether abandon scholarship-schemes in Lebanon, they would restrict them to two students annually, and divert the remaining funds to sponsor students in Jordan. They had reached a critical juncture in the club's progression at that time as they came to the realisation that they would remain limited to an embryonic scholarship-scheme unless they innovated a fund-generating apparatus that would be within their capabilities to create, and more importantly, within their means to sustain and expand. It was out of this that the idea of a 'Craft Shop' was conceived. However, with the total absence of the necessary capital, the club nominated members to a committee that would be entrusted with the task of studying the feasibility of such a project. Among the pioneers were Mrs. Hind Nasser, Mrs. Yusra Owaida, Mrs. Widad Kassar and others.

What followed was an exhaustive one-year 'sweeping survey' of what crafts were actually being produced throughout the Kingdom, commencing in Amman, Madaba and Salt. The methodology was rather rudimentary but highly effective; the committee-mem-

bers asked around 'who did what,' and literally went from door-to-door, visiting the artisans and crafts-people. For instance, they identified crocheted-work in Madaba and other artistic disciplines elsewhere. "A few of us who really believed in the ultimate viability of the project had to endure sceptics' remarks which did — admittedly, at times — affect our morale. We remained steadfast nonetheless. What really helped was that we were personally enamoured with the crafts. And so we persevered, warding off a seemingly self-rejuvenating plethora of obstacles that would have otherwise clouded our final objective. Our aim was to establish a revenue-yielding enterprise that would support our activities and a significantly-expanded scholarship scheme, as well as help the crafts-people in Jordan," disclosed Widad Kassar.

The first year was undoubtedly their hardest, invested in identifying various craft-sources and haphazardly all over the country wherever they heard of someone making candles, children's clothing, brassware, jewellery, embroderies, ceramics, etc. Soon, with their network rapidly increasing, it became essential to find an affordable place that would serve as the centre of their unified efforts. Suitable premises were soon found in the heart of Jabal Amman, at the 2nd Circle, but they weren't affordable. Remedying the situation was the late Sharif Nasser, who donated a car on which lottery-tickets were drawn. The vehicle's actual value of five or six thousand dinars was significantly exceeded in terms of the lottery's resultant funds, consequently making possible the renting and inauguration of the new centre's initial functioning for two whole years (inclusive of the stocking up of the shop and the hiring of two employees).

The ladies' hard work paid off and was matched by good fortune; by any account, they got off to a spectacular start. "We finally had a place that doubled up as a shop and 'headquarters', so to speak, where our committee-members would start receiving and meeting with artisans and crafts-people," says Mrs. Kassar.

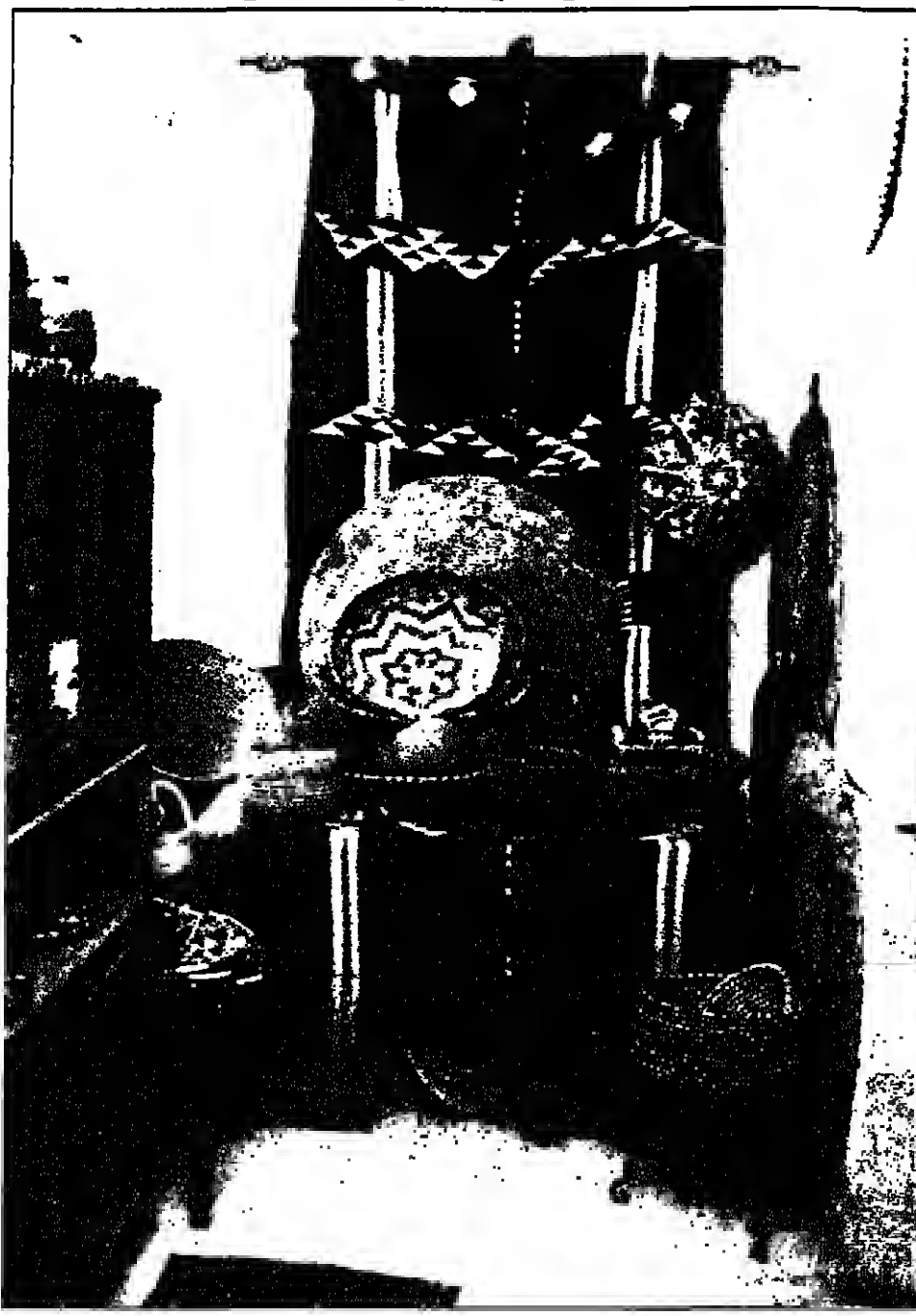
Miss. Salma N'meh, a committee-member of club, was entrusted with the design-aspects. She was a professional interior-designer who volunteered her services, designing, among other things, the Centre's interior. The institutional infrastructure was finally viable and functioning. Revenues started being registered and the new goal was to accord special attention to the artisans themselves, bringing them out 'into the open' and supporting them. The aim was not only to make money, but to help the crafts-people. Such a trend was therefore

unprecedented in Jordan, and it was the Crafts Centre that pioneered such a scheme. The artisans began to feel that — in contrast to merely drawing a trickle of heritage-admirers among individuals and shopkeepers — they were now centre-stage in the consideration of an organised, specialised body; the BUC's Crafts Centre. Artisans could come and display their wares, pending adequate quality-standards. Some of today's prominent artisans were among those early fledgling craftsmen of the early seventies.

The Centre pursued a policy of displaying crafts-exhibits in the presence of the artisans who produced them; it wanted to bring the crafts-people in direct contact with members of the public. It had come in the realisation of the centre's staff that the wholesale handicrafts-merchants went to great lengths to keep the artisans nameless, faceless and totally anonymous, effectively exploiting them into selling their work unreasonably cheaply and then reselling it themselves, often making ten-fold the profit of the artisans. The absence in Jordan, (prior to that time), of an organised marketing and promotion institution — such as the BUC's Crafts Centre came to be — enabled such practices to pass unchecked. Predictably, the detriment befell the consumer and the producer, benefiting only the middlemen and wholesale merchants.

With the advent of the 'centre,' those days rapidly melted away. Artisans were being put in direct contact with prospective clientele, with minimal profit-margins for the centre. Moreover, the public were not only invited to meet the crafts-people and their products, but were encouraged to visit the centre and see the artisans actually at work. They could talk to them and ask them questions while they worked. One distinct example involved a clay-potter working at his wheel, right before the public. Countless similar set-ups were arranged with artisans of different crafts: glass-blowers, brass and silver-smiths, carpet-weavers, embroderers, wood-carvers, etc.

Inevitably, the rising demand for heritage-crafts and the constant emergence of qualified crafts-people necessitated the project's expansion. It was at that point that the view of progressing beyond the BUC's auspices was adopted. Contacts were accordingly made by Mrs. Hind Nasser and other members with the Development & Industrial Bank, who already had a policy (and department) dedicated to supporting crafts-people. The bank agreed to put some money aside for the project. Royal Jordanian (airlines) and the JETT tourist-bus company were approached with simi-



Assorted Jordanian handicrafts at the Aydi Craft Development Centre in Amman

lar motives, (the idea being to enlist the financial support of key tourism-related private & public sector enterprises).

These mega-enterprises stipulated the conversion of the Crafts Centre — therefore strictly a non-profit welfare association — into a full-fledged profit-realising, share-holding company, since none of them were advocates of traditional philanthropy. Accordingly, each of the three enterprises came to possess shares, though in order to incorporate the private sector more convincingly, ten private citizens of means were asked to contribute JD 500 each.

The outcome was the emergence of a financially secure company with a healthy capital. This was to usher in a new thriving phase in the once-embryonic 'human-development-through-cultural-revival-project.' The Crafts Centre had metamorphosed into a registered company comprised of the original BUC Alumni Club, Royal Jordanian, the Development & Industrial Bank, the JETT Company, as well as the ten private shareholders. The latter included the Nazzari family, Haj Ali Dajani of the Chamber of Trade (one of the foremost supporters), Mrs. Zaha Mango and Mr.

Tony Soussa.

However, far from reaping dividends alone, the centre's new status as a company attracted the prohibitively-depleting arm of the Income Tax Department, which excised up to 30% of the profits. To avoid sinking under, the newly-spawned crafts-company had to revise its entire pricing structure. They had to change their entire institutional matrix to cope with their new reality, effectively forcing them to reeducate themselves in legal, auditing and administrative matters since the liability-free days of their former charitable organisation. Their new commitments to a multitude of parties posed a real, almost critical, challenge.

The new era's responsibilities included the formation of a board of trustees, a committee of advisors, a consulting committee (that included artist Samia Zaru, Her Excellency Ambassador Laurie Hlass, Ms. Hind Nasser and others). Auditorial supervision of an on-location accountant from the Development & Industrial Bank was also instituted. Selected to run the company were Ms. Barbara Nasri Atallah and Ms. Abba Kassar, who jointly undertook to lay down the necessary corporate foundations. It was the tran-

sition from welfare to corporate status that heralded a move from the old premises at the 2nd Circle to a larger house in the same general area, formerly home to the late Fawzi Al-Mufti.

"Providing invaluable guidance and corporate know-how during the formation-process of the company was Mr. Ziad Annab, Director General of the Development & Industrial Bank. He actually took time off and taught us like students. Our company fit the bank's criteria for financial and other support, given that it entailed human development. This was an area in which the bank was particularly active, and thus contributed a considerable sum (for the early 70's) to the tune of JD18,000 or so. The bank also strove to demonstrate to donor states the extent to which well-conceived and well-managed small enterprises can, in fact, go a long way in improving the lot of artisans and crafts-people here in Jordan," expounded Mrs. Kassar, adding that: "It was a human development programme in the fullest sense; a project for us and a project for the bank; a very good symbiosis."

Surprisingly, the tourist industry proved a rather ineffectual source of revenue for the company; the

pattern of tourist movement and behaviour provided for haphazard purchases, at best. They tended to visit in large groups, more often than not crowding the shop and taking a long time to buy small scattered items. Furthermore, the local bus drivers and guides would demand an exorbitant 25% on all collective purchases, while leaving the shop unable to raise prices proportionately in compensation. However, tourists coming as individuals did not pose the same dilemma. It became clear that it did not pay to concentrate on group-tourists. Rather, the prime targeted clientele became local residents, who would visit time and again, as well as non-Jordanians in diplomatic missions, etc.

"Locals started developing a taste for rustic and authentic elements found in Jordanian handicrafts, using them to beautify their homes and gardens in place of imported goods. This pattern of awareness and active choice signalled the onset of the erosion of long-held stigmas vis-a-vis local artisanship. Jordanians started abandoning their apologetic stance and scepticism regarding domestic handicrafts; in fact, what started setting in was a situation where people's pride started finding its way back into the complex matrix of national heritage. The pride was back. People progressively began taking joy in items produced or found in Jordan," explained the Aydi's new Director, Mrs. May Khoury.

Today, the fruit of two decades of labour, patience, imagination and love, the Jordan Craft Development Centre, 'Al Aydi,' enjoys regional and international renown as a centre dedicated to the principle and practice of human development through cultural preservation. The Aydi — (meaning 'hands' in Arabic, to both honour the craftsman's creative hands and to ward off the evil eye) — stands as a testament to the vision and relentless hard work of a now-familiar "small band of women" who nurtured a dream into reality, introducing the rich and crucial dimension of a crafts-oriented national-heritage renaissance in our cosy Jordanian society; a programme with a social conscience, helping more than 80 artisan-families. Yet, to the curious passer-by or the unsuspecting visitor, the Aydi shop still exudes that snug and reassuring aura of the genial corner shop; all the more so, now with the Christmas season round the corner. And though the notion of 'corners' features prominently in the overall context, the Aydi guarantees that "no corners are cut" in either quality or originality of exhibits on display. Merry Christmas.

Spielberg joins influx of filmmakers to New Zealand

By Victoria Batchelor
Reuter

WELLINGTON

When Steven Spielberg decided to film part of the sequel to the dinosaur thriller Jurassic Park in New Zealand, he joined a growing line of international filmmakers beating a path to these shores.

From Hercules to King Kong, a growing number of projects are being financed or filmed by overseas companies which have recognised New Zealand's potential as a movie-making location.

Foreign directors say magnificent and easily accessible scenery, cheap

per costs and high quality, English-speaking film crews are the drawcards which make shooting here so attractive.

"The light is beautiful — the best I've seen — and you have every kind of landscape. The crew, actors and creative talents are world-class," American-born Paris-based director Bob Swaim told Onfilm magazine while filming here in September.

Swaim was filming The Climb, starring British actor John Hurt. It is part of a 120 million New Zealand dollars (\$85 million) deal signed this year between New Zealand's Isambard Productions,

French film company Canal Plus and Canada's Allegro.

Next year, cinemagoers worldwide will see the rainforests, granite peaks and giant waterfalls of the South Island's Fiordland region as the scenic backdrop to Spielberg's The Lost World: Jurassic Park.

"Certainly, in a film of this kind, we had the option of shooting just about anywhere in the world and after looking... the area in New Zealand was deemed to be absolutely the best," said the film's publicist, Don Levy.

"A lot of us have worked here before and we know New Zealand

technicians and cameras are very good — renowned," said Scott Easton, production manager for Spielberg's production company, Amblin Entertainment.

But talk of New Zealand as a new Hollywood is premature, Tom Parkinson of Isambard Productions told Reuters.

"New Zealand has probably only done about four feature films this year. Well, that's just a breath compared to other places.

"It seems large for this country mainly because it has been a cottage industry and has only just woken up to being

professional," said Parkinson, whose company is involved in productions with partners from Hong Kong, Britain, Germany, France, Canada and the United States.

Foreign investment in the local film-production industry amounted to 39.4 per cent of the total 175 million New Zealand dollars spent on such productions in 1995, but room for further growth is seen.

To help with the growing demand, the local industry set up a new body, film New Zealand, a year ago to provide a direct line of information for offshore companies. "What they don't know

about is our industry capabilities... they ask me how advanced we are, what the state of our technology is," Film New Zealand Executive Director Di Oliver said.

"Part of what I do when I go away is to talk to them about New Zealand and say 'yes we do have this technology. Yes, we do have electricity. Yes we do have fax machines,'" she laughed.

International film companies tend to bring their key creative staff to New Zealand initially, but may then switch to local employees, Oliver said.

"There are some productions, such as Her-

cules and Xena: Princess Warrior, that have been here for over two years. They are now using more of our key creatives, because they've gotten to know our capabilities. They are even using some of our directors.

"Xena and Hercules have done wonders in training New Zealand film crews," Oliver said of the two action television series created by the American company Renaissance Films and shot here since 1993. Both are popular in the United States.

New Zealand, which this year celebrates a century of movie-making, has experienced a recent resurgence in local

film productions with Once Were Warriors, The Piano and Heavenly Creatures winning international recognition.

New Zealander Peter Jackson, who directed Heavenly Creatures, filmed The Frighteners, starring Michael J. Fox, here last year with financing from Universal Pictures.

Jackson's next project, with partner Fran Walsh, is to produce a new version of the classic King Kong. Also financed by Universal, it will be filmed at Jackson's own special effects facility in New Zealand.

Towards a way to repair knee ligament damage

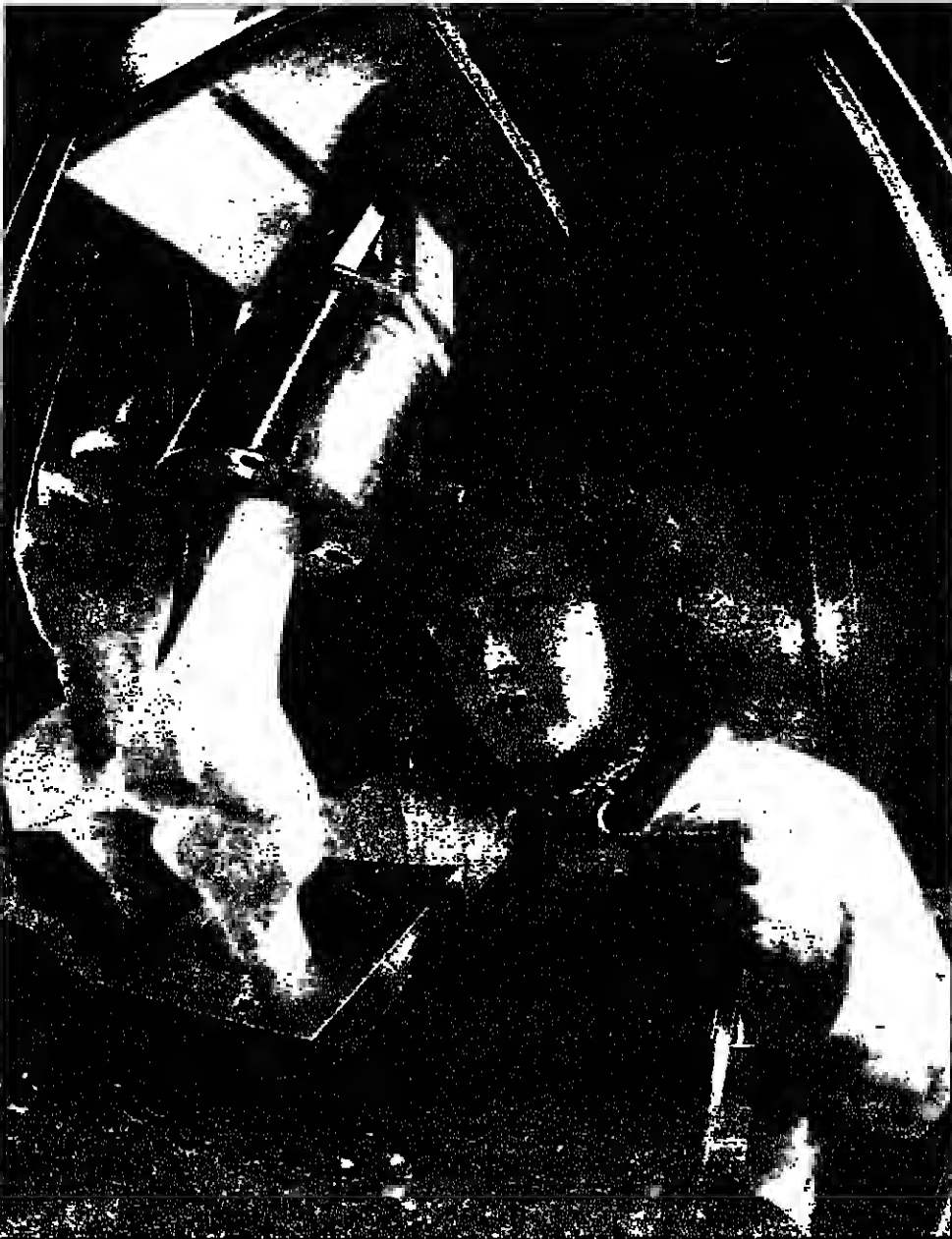
LIGAMENT AND tendon injuries are becoming increasingly common with growing participation in a variety of physically demanding sports. Clinical interest in such injuries and their repair for an active young population is stimulating a number of research programmes in Britain.

At the forefront of this work is the Interdisciplinary Research Centre (IRC) in Biomedical Materials, based at Queen Mary and Westfield College (QMWC), part of the University of London.

Here, researchers led by Dr. Julia Shelton are studying two approaches to knee ligament repair: to provide a permanent "scaffold" for tissue in-growth or a temporary scaffold allowing the body to regenerate its own ligament. In either case the biomechanical properties of the scaffold are fundamental to a successful repair and to ensuring the best biological response.

Our picture shows researcher Zoe Hudson using a combined tension-torsion machine for a test on a model of a human knee joint. The information obtained will help to establish a reliable testing procedure for use on real knee joints eventually.

The project team's aim is ultimately to be able to regenerate the anterior cruciate ligament — the part of the knee that tends to be damaged commonly in sporting injuries — as



part of the DTI and EPSRC (Department of Trade and Industry, and Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) funded LINK research programme in association with the Smith and Nephew company. The ICR at QMWC has many state-of-the-art mechanical testing facilities with environ-

mental chambers enabling testing under physiological conditions (the conditions encountered within the body).

It forms a national focus for future development of biomaterials in the U.K., providing an interface between industry, the health services and other research organisations.

As well as aiming to create a new generation of implant materials with enhanced lifetimes, the centre has an important role in biomedical materials with enhanced lifetimes, the centre has an important role in biomedical materials education and training — London Press Service.

Male angst spurs on hunt for the missing sperm

By A. J. Singh

MUMBAI, India — Ramesh, 26, a healthy and upwardly mobile junior business executive, is a sad man these days.

Married three years ago, he longs to be a father. But doctors in Mumbai (formerly Bombay) say he is unlikely to be able to sire children. Not only is his sperm count low, but his semen contains many dead and defective sperm.

Santosh, a 28-year-old engineer, has also been seeking fertility advice. After six years of marriage, he is without an heir. His sperm count was found to be low but not hopeless. Doctors say it could increase, but this has not happened yet.

Ramesh and Santosh are two of the millions of Indian males who — anxious and frustrated at their failure to impregnate their wives — are doing the rounds of clinics in the hope of finding help.

They are victims of a big fall in sperm counts in India which is worrying many people. Some regard the phenomenon as nature's answer to over-population in a country with close to a billion inhabitants. Others blame it on industrial chemicals in the environment, on oral contraceptives and on modern lifestyles.

Evidence of falling sperm counts around the world is inconclusive and contradictory, with some countries apparently showing an increase. But India has registered a sharp decline. Recent reports suggest the problem is particularly marked among agricultural workers in certain parts of

the states of Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. "What we are observing is only the tip of the iceberg," says Dr. Anand Kumar, a reproductive biologist at the Hope Clinic in Bangalore. Dr. Firoz Parikh, a Mumbai-based gynaecologist who pioneered micromanipulation (injecting a sperm into an egg) in India, says: "Over the past decade, the average fall (in numbers of sperm) could be 15 million per millilitre."

Male fertility is measured by the number of sperm per millilitre of semen. This was found to be 113 million on average in 1938. Now it is about 66 million.

Doctors can find no medical reason for low sperm counts in most cases. Leading infertility specialists Dr. Aniruddha Malpani and Dr. Anjali Malpani — co-authors of a book: *Getting Pregnant: A Guide for Infertile Couples* — say low sperm count is the cause of infertility among 90 per cent of the couples who consult them.

Aniruddha Malpani, who set up India's first sperm bank five years ago, says: "We are now rejecting nine out of 10 healthy young (prospective donor) men because their sperm counts

aren't high."

Experts are also worried about the quality of sperm. A higher percentage of weak, dead and abnormal sperm — sometimes with two heads or two tails — are now found in semen.

Motility (speed and swimming direction of individual sperm cells) and morphology (shape and size) are as important as numbers in the process of conception.

"The average motility rate is also on the decline," says Dr. Parveen Kini, a Mumbai specialist. "And the average seminal volume has fallen from 3.7 to 2.5 millilitres."

Weak and malformed sperm stand little chance of fertilising an egg. If they do, the pregnancy can end in miscarriage or a deformed baby.

No-one knows the exact cause for the decline. However, stress, alcohol, smoking, bicycle riding, drug taking, exposure to X-ray radiation and even tight-fitting underwear have all been blamed for disturbing sperm production.

One patient reportedly recovered when he stopped wearing tight briefs. "Testicles perform best when they hang," says Dr. Kini. When the testicles are pulled up, blood tempera-

ture in the scrotum rises. "This can damage sperm cells."

Some researchers think the real culprits are chemicals such as pesticides and substances used in the plastics industry, as well as synthetic hormones used in birth-control pills. These can build up in the food chain and water supplies and affect humans, possibly damaging sperm production and fetal development.

British researchers recently suggested that the female hormone oestrogen, naturally discharged by women, was somehow being reactivated in sewage-treatment works and causing male fish living downstream to develop female characteristics.

Environmentalists, meanwhile, have linked pollution to diseases of the male reproductive system and birth defects such as malformed or undersized penises and testes.

Dr. Kumar believes pesticides are responsible for damaging males in rural areas. "Humans are to blame if fertility is going down," he says.

Some doctors think the problem is being exaggerated, while other people find the subject amusing.

Humourist Manu Joseph says: "If it is what you call a biological trend then perhaps my father was half the man my grandfather was. This makes poor me only quarter the man my grandad was."

"True, my father had only two children while my grandfather had eight. But this, I presume, had more to do with the growing popularity of rubber," — Gemini News.

Report sees two-fold increase in skin cancer

By Maggie Fox

Reuters

LONDON — Cases of skin cancer could quadruple by the year 2100 if ozone-depleting chemicals were not restricted, scientists report.

Even with current agreements to reduce production of such chemicals, skin cancer cases will double, they said in a report in the science journal *Nature*.

Harry Slaper and colleagues at the Netherlands Institute of Public Health and the Environment said their findings showed how important it was to restrict production of such chemicals.

They based their findings on a complex analysis of current cases, skin cancer tests on mice and projections of ozone levels, they wrote in *Nature*.

A 1985 agreement known as the Vienna Convention set up a framework for reducing production of chemicals that harm the ozone layer. These include chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), used widely in refrigeration and aerosols.

They react with oxygen in the ozone layer, which protects the Earth from the sun's ultraviolet radiation. Such radiation not only damages crops but causes skin cancer.

So countries agreed to cut chemical production. In 1987 a plan for phasing out production was signed in Montreal — although there have been problems implementing it.

CFC production was banned worldwide in January. But there is still a significant black market in the chemical. For the scenario in which no restrictions were placed on

chemicals the researchers assumed a three per cent annual increase in production of CFCs, halons and methyl chloroform. Under Montreal Agreement, production of the five major offenders is supposed to be dropped to 50 per cent by 1999.

"We evaluated the skin cancer types: Squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, the most frequent but least aggressive, and cutaneous malignant melanoma, the least frequent but most aggressive," they wrote.

Skin cancer cases due to ozone depletion would double in the United States under the Montreal Agreement, they found. But they would have more than quadrupled had there been no agreement.

They would grow two per cent if all production of ozone-depleting chemicals had stopped at the end of 1995. Figures were just slightly lower for northwest Europe.

"These results demonstrate the importance of the international measures agreed upon under the Vienna Convention," the researchers wrote.

Current cancer rates are about two per thousand in the United States each year and a little more than half that in Europe.

A second report in *Nature* found that the ozone hole over Antarctica would start to "heal" by the early part of the next century, provided agreements are honoured.

David Hoffman of the U.S. Weather Service NOAA said the first signs would be seen by 2008. "The ozone layer would then continue to heal slowly, reaching pre-ozone hole levels by about the year 2050," he wrote.

Future gains seen in war on cancer

By Joanne Kenen

Reuters

WASHINGTON — Battered by a small but historic drop in cancer death rates, top experts have predicted that practical prevention efforts combined with cutting-edge scientific advances will lead to more gains.

National Cancer Institute and American Cancer Society experts this week released studies showing a steady decline in cancer deaths every year from 1991 to 1995, the first time such a trend has emerged since public health officials began gathering cancer statistics in

the 1930s.

"Perhaps this is the beginning of a victory lap," said Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala.

American Cancer Society experts told at a news conference it was quite realistic to forecast that death rates would drop by a fourth within 20 years and it may even be possible to cut the cancer fatality rate in half.

U.S. cancer officials did not make such specific forecasts but they said a combination of better prevention and detection and new treatments should yield more and more gains. Asked what was most excit-

ing about the next stage of the war on cancer, National Cancer Institute Director Dr. Richard Klausner told Reuters: "Everything" is the biggest cloud on the horizon is teen smoking. Nearly one-third of cancer cases are tobacco-related and an increase in teen smoking could wipe out many of the gains.

No one is suggesting that science is on the brink of conquering cancer. More than a half-million Americans and millions more around the globe still die of the disease every year. But scientists in the last few years have finally begun to understand the processes that

cause it. Some of the remarkable molecular and genetic discoveries of recent years should start finding their way into the clinic. There will not be a "magic bullet" cure but doctors should soon have better diagnostic tools including relatively simple ones like a urine test for bladder or kidney cancer as well as improved life-prolonging therapies.

And by using the tools already in hand — but using them better — more gains can be made, Dr. James Marks of the Centre for Disease Control and Promotion told Reuters.

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

FOR THE VETS

By Penni Singleton

ACROSS

1. Deter
5. Enthusiasm
9. Venerated
14. Dainty deer
15. Logical start
20. Healthy
21. Rival
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23. Old Glory
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2. Former British colony
3. Fox
4. Game program
5. Certain persons
6. Ranks
7. "There's a" (Lovers)
8. "Bitter is the sweet" (Babel)
9. Uncontrolled action
10. World War II
11. First name in whores
12. Alphabetical run
13. "Bitter is the sweet" (Babel)
14. Scavenging
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DIAGRAMLESS, 19x19

By Frances Burton

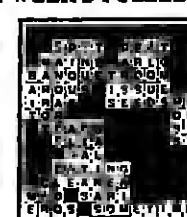
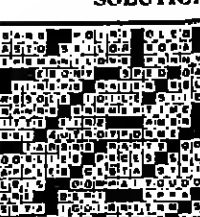
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2. Bottle label
3. Use a skibo
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DOWN

1. Treadmill
2. Scullery
3. Conductor
4. Johnson
5. Afternoon social
6. Actor Michael
7. Food taster
8. Degrade
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SOLUTIONS OF LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE



UAE pushes for Gulf Arab normalisation with Baghdad

ABU DHABI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has made the strongest push for Arab reconciliation with Gulf war for Iraq, is urging regional allies to normalise ties with Baghdad, a UAE official said on Wednesday.

But differences appear to have sharpened between the UAE and Kuwait which has rejected such calls.

"His Highness UAE President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan is encouraging other Gulf Arab states to normalise relations with Iraq," the official told Reuters.

"He said we (Arabs) have to all do it together," he added.

A UAE official familiar with UAE thinking said there had been no contacts between the UAE and Iraq, aside from humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people.

"His Highness said that we are Arabs and we have to forget what happened. We have to renegotiate with Iraq and strengthen our ties once again on a strong basis based on goodwill. We can't keep going on like this," said the official.

But Kuwait, still bitter over Iraq's lightning invasion in 1990 which shocked militarily vulnerable Gulf Arab states, is maintaining a tough line on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Kuwait on Tuesday said it had turned down a call by Sheikh Zayed during a recent meeting in Abu Dhabi with Kuwait's Crown Prince and prime minister, Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al-Sabah, to reconcile with Iraq.

Sheikh Saad told

Kuwait's parliament that "reconciliation does not apply to a country like Iraq" and the "Iraqi regime cannot be trusted."

Sheikh Zayed, the Gulf's elder statesman, has repeatedly called for a new chapter in relations with Iraq, which in 1990 threatened to retaliate against Kuwait and the UAE for flooding world markets with oil just before its troops invaded Kuwait.

The UAE leader, an influential regional player respected for his mediation efforts, has urged reconciliation to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people who have lived under crippling United Nations sanctions for six years.

Sheikh Zayed's call is a bonus for Iraq which has gone from a global oil power to an international pariah hit by everything from humanitarian crises to American air strikes.

Baghdad on Monday implemented a deal signed in May allowing it to sell oil worth \$2 billion over six months to pay for food and medicine. It will mark the first time Iraqi oil has been available on world markets since sanctions were imposed after the invasion.

The UAE and its partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council Qatar and Oman have softened their line on Iraq since the invasion, but Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the region's dominant political and economic power, have maintained a tough stand.

The UAE, aside from its humanitarian concerns, is fearful that a weak Iraq will

play into the hands of the Gulf's non-Arab heavy-weight power Iran, just across the waterway.

UAE Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah Al Nuaimi on Saturday said "Iraq's inability to exercise self-defence has created a strategic and military imbalance in the region," underscoring Baghdad's traditional position as a counterweight to Tehran.

He added that Iran had deployed offensive weapons at three Gulf islands disputed by Abu Dhabi and Tehran.

The official UAE mood was highlighted in newspaper comments which drew a sharp distinction between the Iraqi president and his people.

In a front-page editorial on Wednesday, Al Khaleej said: "Iraq is not Saddam Hussein. And the Iraqi people are not the ruling party and the brutal security apparatus."

Newspapers also launched an unusual attack on Rolf Ekeus, the U.N. official in charge of destroying Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, accusing him of serving "masters" in Washington.

Mr. Ekeus arrived in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday as part of a Gulf tour to seek financial support for his mission.

"The general feeling is that sanctions are not weakening Saddam Hussein. As the U.S. says he is building palaces and strengthening his grip over Iraqis and the people are the ones who are suffering," said the Gulf official.



German experts examine illegally shipped plastic waste at a Beirut port on Wednesday (Reuters photo)

Germany to take back waste sent to Beirut

BEIRUT (AFP) — Preliminary tests carried out by German experts Wednesday on German waste containers dumped in Beirut since August showed that they contain toxic materials which necessitate their return to Germany.

"Preliminary examinations of this waste proved the presence of materials banned in Lebanon and I think these 36 containers will be shipped back to Germany to be treated."

said Wolfgang Lerke, the first secretary at the German embassy in Beirut.

The German experts, along with Lebanese experts and a representative from the international environment group Greenpeace, examined and took samples from 22 out of the 36 containers at the Beirut port.

U.N. panel adopts pricing mechanism for Iraqi oil exports

(Continued from page 1)

north in August.

But on Monday, Iraq accepted the remaining U.N. conditions blocking implementation of the oil-for-food plan. The United States and other major powers said the way was now open for Mr. Ghali to give the go-ahead to the plan as soon as final steps have been taken.

Approval of the oil pricing formula was automatic after none of the 15 members of the Security Council Sanctions Committee on Iraq raised objections by 1 p.m. New York time.

Earlier, U.S. officials said they would not object. The United States was seen as the last possible obstacle to approval of the committee.

The 50-page interim report, submitted to the council by U.N. Undersecretary-General Chinmaya Gharekhan, said about two-thirds of the revenues from the sales, or about \$1.32 billion, will pay for humanitarian supplies for Iraqi

civilians.

Of that, \$260 million will go to Iraqis living in Kurdish areas of the north. About 30 per cent of the revenues will compensate victims of the Gulf war and the rest for administrative costs and the U.N. programme to monitor Iraq's weapons programmes.

"The distribution plan confirms the willingness of the government of Iraq to cooperate fully ... (allowing) unrestricted freedom of movement and access to United Nations personnel," the report said.

In London, a Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesman said the British government was "pleased that Iraq has finally agreed to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 986, as we have long urged."

The delay has caused much unnecessary suffering to the Iraqi people," the spokesman said. "Implementation will bring them some relief, but they will sadly not enjoy a normal life until Iraq fulfills its obligations under the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions. Sanctions will remain until Iraq does so. It is hard to imagine this happening while Saddam remains in power."

By accepting the accord, the Iraqis were assured that the United States will approve the mechanism for setting prices," another diplomat said, adding that Washington had immediately described Iraq's move as "good news."

Unlike several months ago, Iraq no longer insists

Verdict given in sabotage case

(Continued from page 12)

the military prosecution.

Judge Faouri, however, ruled that it was "permissible to rely on the suspect's testimonies even if they were detained by security forces for a long period."

The five other defendants who were indicted and sentenced of slandering King Hussein were: Nassre Izzedin Tahayneh, 24, (three years), Nabil Yousef Abu Harthieh, 28, (30 months), Sharif Ibrahim Jumah, 37, (two years), Ahmad Abdullah Zeitawi, 25, (two years), and Mohammad Abdul Karim Rawashdeh, 23, (two years).

The three defendants who walked free were Mohammad Wasfi Abu Khalil, 33, Mohammad Fakhr Saleh, 28, and Aladdin Atef Abdul Jawad, 24.

According to court transcripts, one of them received military training in Pakistan in 1989, and after living in Kuwait for three years, he smuggled hand grenades and mines in 1992 into Jordan and hid them in his house in Yajouz area.

The defendants were expelled from court several times for disrupting procedures during the 14-month trial.

The group was arrested before actually carrying out any attack.

Bayat Al Imam followers believe only themselves to be the "true followers" of the Islamic faith and do not attend mosque prayers or schools because they reject the entire system.

The defendants also refused to stand trial at first because they said they did not believe in the court's justice system.

They had said they will defend themselves, or "God would decide their fate."

The sentences will be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within 30 days.

General Assembly to stress need to develop information in Palestine

NEW YORK (UNIS) —

The General Assembly would note that several defined provisions of the Department of Public Information (DPI) special information programme on the question of Palestine were yet to be implemented and would stress the importance of such implementation, under the terms of one of four draft resolutions approved Tuesday by the Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The assembly would request DPI, among other things, to organise fact-finding news missions for journalists to the area, including the territories under the administration of Palestine and the occupied territories, and to provide media development assistance to the Palestinian people, including training of broadcasters and journalists.

Following approval of the text, the permanent observer for Palestine said that implementation of the DPI

special information programme would be extremely difficult because of a new paragraph contained in a Fourth Committee (Special and Decolonisation) draft resolution. That paragraph requests that DPI be provided with an identification of all costs arising from information mandates contained in resolutions other than those recommended by the Committee on Information. The paragraph should be reconsidered and its harmful impact neutralised. The political will of the international community and the assembly should not be circumvented by such technicalities, he added.

By the terms of another draft approved Tuesday, focusing on the Division for Palestinian Rights of the secretariat, the assembly would request the secretary-general to provide the division with the necessary resources of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine.

By the terms of a third draft text, the assembly would authorise the committee to mobilise support and assistance for the Palestinian people. It would request the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and other relevant United Nations bodies to cooperate fully with the committee.

The final draft text approved Tuesday, on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, would have the assembly note with satisfaction the withdrawal of the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, initiation of the Palestinian National Authority in those areas, and the beginning of the redeployment of the Israeli army in the rest of the West Bank. It would express concern over the difficulties facing the Middle East peace process, and the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian people as a result of Israeli positions and measures.

No more free telephone calls

(Continued from page 11)

Corporation which was registered as a commercial entity two months ago.

The company remains fully government-owned but it now operates as an independent commercial organisation governed by the Companies Law as opposed to its previous status as a semi-autonomous government institution.

The National Telecommunications Company has invited bids for a "strategic partner" so that it could expand and modernise its facilities as well as absorb up-to-date technology to keep up with advances in the area of telecommunications without investing state funds.

The decision to withdraw the official telephone lines was taken "in view of the reality that the strategic partner is not likely to accept that the company continues to extend free services to the government," said an official source.

It was not immediately clear whether the decision to withdraw the lines also covered ministries and government departments.

Conservative estimates put at several million dinars the annual telephone bills incurred by government employees using their official telephone lines connected at their residences. Experts said the Telecommunications Corporation used to maintain a record of the bills although they were

never formally presented to the government for payment. As such, the figures were never announced in public.

The government also permits members of the Cabinet and senior government officials to have mobile phones, but this arrangement is not expected to be affected because it has been made directly between the government and the private sector company which offers cellular phone services.

Another source said government servants who might lose their telephone lines as a result of the decision could apply directly to the National Telecommunications Company to retain the lines but they would be treated as any other customer of the company with all that it entails.

stressed that the only unusual aspect was the fact that the violence was captured on film and broadcast on television.

According to Mr. Ben-Yair's report, the files of the attorney general's office and those of the justice ministry contain a total of 264 complaints registered against border policemen by Palestinians for this year.

House elects committees

(Continued from page 12)

Amarin (Karak-centrist), and Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat (Irbid-minister). The Agriculture Committee: Samir Kawar (Balqa-minister), Ali Shari (Balqa-centrist), Deifallah Momani (Irbid-centrist), Abdul Majeed Azzam (Irbid-centrist), Mansour Ben Tarif (Karak-centrist), Mifleh Ruheimi (Bedouin-minister), Hani Masalha (Balqa-centrist), Jamil Hshoush (Karak-centrist), Abdul Rahim Ekour (Irbid-Islamist), Hatem Ghizawi (the Jordan Valley-centrist), Talal Obaidat (Irbid-opposition).

The Labour and Development Committee: Nader Abu Sha'ar (Irbid-centrist), Abdul Hafez Shukhanbeh (Madaba-minister), Hammad Abu Jamous (Amman-minister), Ahmad Kofahi (Irbid-Islamist), Talal Obaidat (Irbid-opposition), Suleiman Sa'ad (Jerash-Islamist), Abdul Hadi Majali (Karak-minister), and Nader Thuheirat (Madaba-centrist).

The Energy and Mineral Resources Committee: Saleh Irshaidat (Irbid-minister), Munir Sobur (Amman-minister), Mohammad Ziben (Bedouins-centrist), Abed Musa Nahar (Amman-centrist) and Bader Riati (Aqaba-Islamist).

The Tourism and Public Services Committee: Mohammad Njadat (Bedouins-minister), Tawfiq Kreishan (Ma'an-centrist), Saleh Irshaidat (Irbid-minister), Abdullah

Ensur (Balqa-minister), and Fawwaz Zoubi (Ramtha-centrist).

The Palestine Committee: Abdul Minem Abu Zant (Amman-Islamist), Ahmad Kofahi (Irbid-Islamist), Fayyad Jarrar (Zarqa-centrist), Theib Anis (Zarqa-Islamist), Abdul Aziz Jaber (Amman-Islamist), Bassam Haddadin (Zarqa-leftist), Mustafa Sheikhat (Balqa-minister), Mohammad Thoeub (Amman-minister), Hammad Abu Jamous (Amman-minister), Abdul Majeed Agtash (Madaba-independent-Islamist) and Salem Zawaideh (Madaba-centrist).

The Badia Committee: Jamal Khreish (Bedouin-centrist), Mansour Ben Tarif (Karak-centrist), and Mohammad Huneith (Amman-centrist).

The Law Committee: Ibrahim Kilani (Amman-Islamist), Hanunam Sa'eed (Amman-Islamist), Abdullah Akho Irshaidat (bedouins-centrist), Abdul Karim Dughmi (Mafray-minister), Toujan Faisal (Amman-opposition), Abdul Aziz Jaber (Amman-Islamist), Mahmoud Huweimel (Balqa-minister), Hatem Ghizawi (Irbid-centrist), Ahmad Qudah (Ajloun-minister), Hani Masalha (Balqa-centrist), and Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh (Ramtha-centrist).

Finance Committee: Ali Abul Ragheb (Amman-minister), Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat (Irbid-minister), Ali Shari (Balqa-centrist), Samih Furah (Madaba-centrist), Toujan Faisal

(Amman-opposition), Mohammad Oweidah (Balqa-Islamist), Abed Musa Nahar (Amman-centrist), Hashem Dabbas (Balqa-minister), Nader Abu Sha'ar (Irbid-centrist), and Abdullah Akailah (Tafilah-Islamist). The Arab and Foreign Affairs Committee: Fawzi Tueimeh (Balqa-centrist), Mohammad Haj (Zarqa-Islamist), Mohammad Thoeub (Amman-minister), Mansour Daoudieh (Tafilah-minister), Mohammad Oweidah (Balqa-Islamist), Abdul Hadi Majali (Karak-minister), Rafeh Saoud (Tafilah-centrist), Farah Rabadi (Ajloun-centrist), Nader Thuheirat (Irbid-centrist), and Abdul Majeed Agtash (Madaba-independent-Islamist).

(Amman-Baath), Bassam Emoush (Zarqa-Islamist), Abdul Majeed Azzam (Irbid-centrist), Farah Rabadi (Ajloun-centrist), and Tuher Masri (Amman-centrist). The Culture and Education Committee: Fawzi Tueimeh (Balqa-centrist), Ibrahim Kilani (Amman-Islamist), Mohammad Haj (Zarqa-Islamist), Mohammad Thoeub (Amman-minister), Mansour Daoudieh (Tafilah-minister), Mohammad Oweidah (Balqa-Islamist), Abdul Hadi Majali (Karak-minister), Rafeh Saoud (Tafilah-centrist), Farah Rabadi (Ajloun-centrist), Nader Thuheirat (Irbid-centrist), and Abdul Majeed Agtash (Madaba-independent-Islamist).

(Ajloun-centrist), Nader Thuheirat (Irbid-centrist), and Abdul Majeed Agtash (Madaba-independent-Islamist). The Freedoms Committee: Abdul Karim Dughmi (Mafray-minister), Jamal Khreish (bedouins-centrist), Khalil Haddadin (Amman-Baath), Theib Abdullah (Amman-centrist), Bassam Emoush (Zarqa-Islamist), Tawfiq Kreishan (Ma'an-centrist), Rafeh Saoud (Tafilah-centrist), Khaled Abed Nabbi (Amman-centrist), Mifleh Ruheimi (bedouins-minister), and Abdullah Akailah (Tafilah-Islamist).

Al-Jada
Restaurant

Friday Buffet

Enjoy with your family our lunch Buffet.

A wide variety of Salad Bar

Home-made pasta

Choose your main dish from our menu

Prices
For Adults: 10.00 J.D
Children : 5.00 J.D

For Reservation Call Tel: 821705

Celebration held on the Founding of The Jordanian Branch Of La Chaine des Rotisseurs
(the World Association of Gastronomy).

HRH Prince Ali Ben Nayef deputised for Her Majesty Queen Noor in attending the first celebration of the founding of the branch at a gourmet dinner et the Regency Palace Hotel Tuesday.

Mr. Seeed Sawalha, the society president in Jordan, presented Prince Ali with the highest honorary medal in the presence of Mr. Thierry, the society's chief of international relations who arrived from Paris for the occasion.

During the ceremony meritorious medals were presented to Dr. Saleh Irshaidat, minister of tourism, and the ministry's secretary general, Mr. Akram Masarweh.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1996

Diplomats said Iraq sought routes to the UAE and the Gulf for its trade when political ties with Amman worsened following Jordan's decision last year to shelter Baghdad's dissidents.

*By Thomas S. Pierson,
Astrologer, Carroll
Richter Foundation*

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You desire for an expansion and this is

good day today for such a trip is needed, plan wisely and count the cost so that you will not run out of funds when the need arises. Later the evening meet with knowledgeable people.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You have a fine opportunity to get ahead today, so make the right decisions and then carry through with enthusiasm. Later this evening will be good to see close friends for a fun time while everyone will enjoy.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Add new friends to your present roster today and this will be good for you and them. Put your ideas across to the pigwig who can make suggestion for the best method of action to take so that you can become successful.

MOON CHILDREN
(June 22 to July 21) Go into whatever activities today which can improve your standing in the community where you dwell and make your reputation much brighter. Later this evening you can meet with fellow associates and discuss creative ideas.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You are inspired just now to gain your cherished wishes and close friends also have ideas which can be helpful at this time. Later tonight you can go out with close friends and have a enjoyable time together.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Study your olate today from different perspective.

You'll see that attitude change will improve the relationship which currently exists. Later tonight you can meet with successful persons and get their suggestion.

LIBRA: (September 23 - October 22) Situation: rise today which can give you and fellow associates an opportunity to el ahead faster. Think constructively concerning career activities which you have been involved with for sometime.

CORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Make the changes you have planned today without further delay. Avoid one who could bring much difficulty later this evening and make a plan of action which will make your tasks quite successful in the days ahead.

AGITARIUS: (over-
er 22 to December 21)
et into amusements you
re with enthusiasm
day and be happier with
whatever business activi-
es which you are
volved. Later, this
ening make the effort to
ntact knowledgeable
ople for some construc-
e ideas.

APRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Listen to the suggestions of a close loved one which concerns upgrading the condition of your home and you will be able to increase the value of it. After this evening you can go out on the town with your mate.

QUARIUS: (January to February 19) An early start today in the outside world is wise. So pursue whatever course of action is necessary. Have talks with allies later this evening which can bring much cooperation concerning any career activities.

SCES: (February 20 to March 20) Finances and property should be first on the agenda today, so that you can make your money and the lives of your loved ones more comfortable. Get advanced advice from a wealthy person about how to make your funds grow.

Birthstone of November: Topaz — Tiger's

An intelligence report acquired by the Associated Press accuses Mr. Zardari of overstaffing government departments with his personal appointments "in violation of all rules."

In one province, which he refused to name, every minister had 30 different luxury vehicles at his disposal.

In the last year, the national airline alone hired an additional 1,000 people — all sent to them by the government — despite the fact that it had been operating at a loss.

"I'm horrified to know all about this, but it is true," he said.

— all sent to them by the government — despite the fact that it had been operating at a loss.

Mr. Haqqani said the cutbacks will not result in any reduction in service. It wasn't clear which min-

The report runs through each government department identifying areas where favouritism was shown in the awarding of contracts and tenders as well as jobs given to friends and relatives.

**Additional information may also be obtained from the above number.
This notice is issued on behalf of the Director General,
Telecommunications Regulatory Commission**

34 Year	45 Beet or cane	50 Dam!
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Johnson		
36 Roe	46 Musical	52 Fictional
37 Make amends	composition	brute
38 Cannibal	47 Preceding in	53 Time long past
43 Command	time	54 Some
44 Frau's	48 Confuse	collegians
exclamation	49 Float	55 Transmitted

Energy			* JOD Cross Rates		
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell
Coffee (c/lbs)	115.5	Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1418	Spot	GB Sterling	1.1843	1.1802
Sugar (\$/ton)	308.7	Spot	DE Mark	0.4636	0.4659
Wheat (\$/ton)	127	Spot	CH Franc	0.5481	0.5508
Soya (c/lbs)	22.01	Spot	FR Franc	1.1387	1.1374
Tea (stg/kg)	118	Spot	JP Yen	0.8251	0.8282
Barley (\$/sh)	2.25	Spot	NL Guilder	0.4131	0.4152
Rice (\$/ton)	470	Spot	IT Lira	0.4872	0.4695

side fellow associate and make workable plans which are easy to follow. Later this evening will be good for you to discuss with a knowledgeable person with creative ideas for business.

LEO: (July 23rd to August 21) You have your new ideas truly fixed in your mind today and you can at this time put them into operation with success. Later this evening will be good for writing plans.

good for seeing close friends and have a wonderful time together.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Know what it is today which your mate desires to do before you make plans for you both. The relationship is a partnership which must be a 50-

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Finish that discussion today with an out

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Discuss amusements today with those who want to enjoy

them with you over the weekend. Later this evening will be good for meeting with a bigwig and gain the insight to get any business activities completed successfully.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Study ways and means today for gaining more assets and income. A financial expert give you good advice in order to be successful, so listen. Later this evening you can go out

On this evening you can go out to recreational locations and have a fun time.

WANTED TO GO TO MEXICO THIS YEAR!

WHY NOT? BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY! PRETTY GALS! HOT ROMANCE!

YEH!

THE SENORITAS LOVE TO BE SERENADED BY MOONLIGHT! AH, MUCHACHO!

SURE! BUT I HAVE NO GUITAR!

AND WHO CAN CLIMB A BALCONY WITH A PIANO ON HIS BACK?

WELL, BECAUSE A GOOD PIANO RUNS A GOOD GUITAR!

YEH!

YEH!

[illegible]

Islamic banks flourish but hurdles seen ahead

DUBAI (R) — Islamic banks have become more popular among the world's one billion Muslims, but the more than 185 financial institutions which strictly adhere to the principles of Islamic Sharia law face hurdles to lure more funds, bankers have said.

The growth rate of Islamic banks during the past 20 years has been quite remarkable, if not phenomenal, said International Association of Islamic Banks Secretary-General Samir Abid Shaikh. "But it is now tapering off at five to seven per cent."

He said Islamic financial institutions' assets had jumped 21 times in 10 years to around \$166 billion in 1995.

Islamic banks do not deal in interest — the core of the Western banking system — as it is regarded by many Muslims as usury.

The 20-year-old industry has so far attracted about \$80 billion in funds from devout Muslims. But this is just the tip of the iceberg, bankers say. Hundreds of billions of dollars of Muslims' money is still managed by non-Islamic institutions.

"My worry is that Islamic funds are leaving the (Middle East) region," said Wael Al Mazedeei of the Washington-based Mena Capital Resources. He estimated that \$650 billion of Middle East capital was channelled outside the region, home to a quarter of the world's Islamic financial institutions.

Islamic banks are also facing increasing competition from non-Islamic institutions which have their own Islamic banking units, like U.S. Citibank and others like Flemings.

Flemings investment management has introduced an equity fund that conforms to Islamic law, also excluding equity of firms involved in gambling and alcohol.

"The majority of pioneering work will come from the Islamic windows in Western investment banks rather than Islamic banks. That is already happening," Mr. Al Mazedeei said.

Saudi Prince Mohammad Al Faisal, chairman of Dar Al Maal Al Islami, said better public understanding of Islamic finance was needed to help the industry grow.

"Legal hindrances also need to be addressed. Certain minor modifications of laws to permit Islamic banks to operate in a legal framework," was necessary, Prince Mohammad added.

Accounting and auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions Secretary-General Rifaat Abdul Karim said the industry needed to be more transparent. His organisation was working on setting criteria for better financial disclosure.

United Arab Emirates central bank governor Sultan Bin Nasser Al Suweidi said Islamic financial institutions, which were each subject to the interpretations of their own Sharia committees, should standardise their products and operations. This would help make the regulators' job easier.

Jordanian, Algerian companies to cooperate in production of medicines

AMMAN (J.T.) — Dar Al Dawa, a Jordanian pharmaceutical firm and the Algerian Sidal company Wednesday signed an agreement on cooperation in the production of medicines in Algeria under licence.

Under the terms of the agreement, which was signed in the presence of Health Minister Aref Bataineh and Algeria's Ambassador to Jordan Hamid Shbeirah, Dar Al Dawa will transfer pharmaceutical technology related to the manufacturing of specific drugs and semi-finished products to the Sidal company.

The deal followed a visit earlier this month to Algeria by Dr. Bataineh who headed a delegation of Jordanian businessmen and drug manufacturers. During the visit, the two sides agreed on cooperating in the pharmaceutical industry, registering of medicines produced by either country, treatment of Algerian patients in Jordan and on Algerian purchases of drugs from Jordanian pharmaceutical companies.

Under the 10-year renewable agreement, the Jordanian Dar Al Dawa will ship to Algeria shipments of semi-finished products to be handed over to the Sidal company for its processing in accordance with the Algerian market.

The deal was signed by the Jordanian Dar Al Dawa specifications and to be later sold in the Algerian market.

Nizar Jardaneh and Ali Awn, the manager of Sidal.



Dar Al Dawa manager Nizar Jardaneh (second from left) and Sidal's manager Ali Awn Wednesday sign the cooperation accord in presence of Health Minister Aref Bataineh (left) (Petra photo)

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Ministry finalises plan for road projects valued at JD235.7m

THE MINISTRY of Public Works and Housing has finalised a new plan to implement a number of road projects valued at JD235.7 million over the coming five years.

Mr. Abdul Majeed Al Kabari, the secretary-general's assistant for road affairs, said that a 120-kilometre, four-lane highway linking North Shouneh with South Shouneh is expected for completion within three years at a cost of JD75 million.

The ministry will implement the Qataneh-Karak highway, which will be a four-lane, 33-kilometre road, at a cost of JD26 million. Another project will be a four-lane, 18-kilometre long coastal road in Aqaba at a cost of JD21 million.

Mr. Kabari said Amman would benefit from a 50-kilometre belt road that will be four lanes and will cost about JD21 million.

Other projects include:

- 1) A 20-kilometre, four-lane belt road in Irbid at a cost of JD17.7 million.
- 2) The third stage of the Irbid-North Shouneh road. This stage will be in four lanes and will extend for 12 kilometres at a cost of JD12 million.

- 3) A two-lane road that will extend 26 kilometres between Karak and Al Ghor at a cost of JD14 million.
- 4) A four-lane, 14-kilometre highway that will link the city of Aqaba with the main road at a cost of JD10.5 million.

- 5) A road between the border posts in the area of Umar and King Abdullah bridge at a cost of JD10 million.
- 6) The second stage of the Naour-South Shouneh road valued at JD5 million.

- 7) A four-lane, 12-kilometre highway between Naour and Um Al Basateen estimated to cost JD6 million.
- 8) A four-lane, 19-kilometre highway between Yajouz and Zarqa at a cost of about JD10 million.

- 9) A road between the Prince Mohammad bridge and the facilities surrounding it at a cost of around JD7.5 million.

Mr. Kabari said that there are other road projects to be implemented in the Jordan valley with the financial assistance of Japan (Al Ra'i).

THE BETTER HALF.



"A woman at my office has buns of steel. When she walks, it sounds like two trash cans banging together."

JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

BEREL
COLIG
TROMAN
DRUENE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: A OF (Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: WAGON ARDOR PREFER BURIAL
Answer: Where certain cabbies can take a customer FOR A RIDE

Egypt launches uranium project

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt has launched the first stage of a project to produce uranium for scientific, medical and agricultural use.

Energy Minister Maher Abaza said in statements published Tuesday.

Mr. Abaza said the scheme stipulated the production of uranium "as a by-product of phosphoric acid to meet the fuel requirements needed by specialised atomic research centres for their operations," according to Al Ahram government daily.

In addition, it would be used to produce radioactive isotopes used particularly in the fields of medicine, sciences, industry, agriculture and food preservation, Mr. Abaza said.

Mr. Abaza estimated at \$2 million pounds (about \$2 million) the cost of the first stage of the project, which is expected to produce one tonne of uranium every year.

The project is being run by the Egyptian Nuclear Materials Authority which hopes to expand it to meet the future requirements of peaceful nuclear industries, Mr. Abaza said.

The authority has meanwhile carried out technical and feasibility studies that showed the existence of minerals such as uranium ore and zirconite in the sands of the northeastern coast.

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JERUSALEM											
TELEPHONE: 607.71 / 607.179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 27/11/1996											
LAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	QTY.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
252.000	205.000	ARAB BANK	13.8	1.39	23	1220	306590	248.50	252.50	4.00	+
1.250	.880	MID. EAST INV. BK.	69.0	0.00	17	6790	7147	1.05	1.05	0.00	-
2.700	2.120	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	5.0	6.36	7	15850	34712	2.16	2.19	.03	+
5.250	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.5	2.95	5	1350	6338	4.70	4.68	-.02	-
3.040	2.440	JOR. KOWATY BANK	18.1	0.00	6	620	1548	2.50	2.50	0.00	-
1.200	.880	JOR. GULF BANK	5.8	7.22	18	27700	27014	.97	.97	0.00	-
4.180	3.300	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	17.9	0.00	6	1285	5096	3.62	3.72	.10	+
3.800	3.000	JOR. INTL. FIN. SVCS.	18.3	0.00	3	750	2533	3.35	3.34	-.01	-
3.380	1.800	BEIT-AL-WAL (BEITHA)	1.1	8.15	5	750	1384	1.81	1.85	.03	+
5.850	4.450	ARAB BANKING CO.	23.0	0.00	1	5000	22250	4.45	4.45	0.00	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 191.90	CHNG: -1.36	88	61415	414613				
2.910	1.830	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	10.53	3	600	1126	1.85	1.91	.05	+
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 118.26	CHNG: +0.26	3	600	1126				
1.900	1.450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.3	7.36	29	78500	127501	1.57	1.63	.06	+
1.560	1.210	IBRID ELECTRICITY	9.4	6.94	3	226	324	1.45	1.44	-.01	-
2.800	2.090	SHELPIING LINES	10.7	7.87	1	250	635	2.48	2.54	.06	+
1.950	1.080	RAEL PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	68	30397	36632	1.19	1.21	.02	+
1.050	.870	REAL ESTATE DEV.	4.14	20.0	2	450	605	.89	.90	.01	+
1.260	.580	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	31.3	0.00	8	1950	1190	.58	.61	.03	+
.800	.650	HIGH EXP. REST. MOIN.	9	0.00	2	250	178	.58	.71	.03	+
2.300	1.560	MID. EAST HOTELS	68.1	0.00	5	2100	3100	1.56	1.58	.02	+
1.270	.950	ZARQA EDUCATION	9	0.00	4	1150	1233	1.05	1.07	.02	+
2.430	1.690	UNIFIED CO.	9.3	5.68	2	450	792	1.75	1.76	.01	+
1.200	.020	UNION LAND DEV.	8	0.00	4	994	893	.89	.90	.01	+
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 110.05	CHNG: +1.05	130	116791	173526				
3.770	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.0	3.01	6	1244	4120	3.30	3.32	.02	+
5.960	4.780	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.6	3.45	18	9650	55970	5.75	5.80	.05	+
10.550	8.720	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	9.5	8.51	16	1267	11798	9.22	9.40	.18	+
1.590	1.150	MOLEN INDUSTRIES	56.8	0.00	9	2100	2603	1.23	1.28	.05	+
8.150	6.120	JOR. WORSTED MILLS	9.0	3.56	2	672	4712	7.00	7.02	.02	+
4.870	3.040	ARAB PHARM. IND.	18.0	6.10	64	24120	77418	3.12	3.28	.16	+
2.400	1.500	JOR. RUBBER MANUFACT.	9.8	7.59	7	1150	1830	1.60	1.58	-.02	-
12.650	8.450	ARAB CHEM. IND.	23.2	3.53	1	250	2125	8.45	8.50	.05	+
2.250	1.380	RAFAA INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	5	1850	2653	1.42	1.42	.01	+
8.000	4.250	DAR ALDAMA DV. INV.	12.7	4.31	1	5000	22969	4.48	4.64	.16	+
5.800	3.130	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.3	8.96	3	3000	9938	3.25	3.35	.10	+
.960	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	83	103000	83680	.60	.62	.02	+
1.500	1.060	ARAB PAPER COV. TRD.	7.8	9.01	9	2400	2765	1.15	1.15	0.00	-
3.090	1.570	NATURAL IND.	8.9	10.00	49	52341	81015	.57	.60	.03	+
1.840	.930	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	48	22300	23611	1.01	1.06	.05	+
1.150	.780	JOR. ROZKOH IND.	9	0.00	4	2200	1743	.79	.79	0.00	-
4.250	2.130	NATL. CABLE WIRE. HFAC	13.8	0.00	15	5250	3728	2.16	2.27	.11	+
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 200.60	CHNG: +0.28	617	782518	505432				
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 195.85	CHNG: +2.11	838	561324	1094697				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 27/11/1996											
.790	.440	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	22.9	0.00	10	6300	3510	.55	.57	.02	+
.800	.510	JOR. TRADE FAC.	14.7	0.00	26	19150	10416	.52	.55	.03	+
.950	.440	NATL. CORRESP. CENTERS	2	0.00	36	58000	31614	.52	.55	.03	+
.930	.700	UNION INV. SVCS.	68.9	0.00	40	129500	28490	.71	.72	.01	+
1.110	.370	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	12	20750	8715	.40	.42	.02	+
.950	.680	AL-DAMLIYAT 754	16.3	0.00	3	3000	1410	.70	.73	.03	+
1.080	1.000	UNITED FOR FINANC. INV.	9	0.00	8	4000	3900	1.00	1.05	.05	+
.640	.340	JOR. INDUS. MATCHES-JESCO	9	0.00	6	10200	3774	.35	.37	.02	+
.860	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	11	5450	3442	.62	.64	.02	+
1.760	1.000	NATL. CEMENT	9	0.00	8	7100	3130	1.05	1.08	.03	+
1.000	.520	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	29	24250	14134	.57	.58	.01	+
1.100	.400	NATL. MULT. SER. NAKICO	9	0.00	42	59500	24976	.43	.45	.02	+
.810	.400	NATL. CEMENT 654	9	0.00	3	750	365	.50	.49	-.01	-
1.080	.720	JORDAN STEEL	9	0.00	2	1250	938	.73	.75	.02	+
1.330	1.020	UNION TOBACCO 754	26.5	0.00	8	3850	3216	1.07	1.07	0.00	-
.840	.400	NATL. CEMENT 654	9	0.00	11	6850	1647	.59	.60	.01	+
.830	.390	IND. CERAMIC	26.5	0.00	28	39500	16985	.41	.43	.02	+
1.430	.760	IND. CERAMIC	9	0.00	5	3728	2953	.78	.80	.02	+
.880	.590	NATL. FOUNDRY	9	0.00	8	2713	17732	.63	.64	.01	+
.950	.800	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	56.2	0.00	1	5000	4000	.82	.80	-.02	-
1.500	.530	MID. EAST COMPLEX	8.3	0.00	41	51550	35942	.68	.71	.03	+
GRAND TOTAL			333	478041	221097						
T: New 12 months high L: New 12 months low J: Listed during the past 12 months P/E: Ratio is 100 or more C: Negative P/E E: Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year											

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Williams may be indicted for Senna's death

ROME (R) — An Italian prosecutor has obtained leave to indict Formula One team manager Frank Williams and five other people for alleged manslaughter over the death in 1994 of Ayrton Senna, the Italian news agency ANSA reported Tuesday.

Its despatch from the central city of Bologna, which could not be confirmed, said Williams technical manager Patrick Head and Belgian race director Roland Brunsmeide also faced trial over Senna's death at the San Marino Grand Prix at Imola.

The others were Imola race track directors Federico Bendinelli and Giorgio Poggi and an unnamed Williams mechanic whom investigators allege carried out modifications to the steering column of Senna's car, the agency reports.

Brazilian Senna, three times world champion, suffered fatal head injuries when his Williams car smashed into a wall on Imola's Tamborello Curve during the race on May 1, 1994.

An expert report for Bologna investigators concluded the car's steering column had been modified and snapped as the car took the curve as a result of a poor weld.

The Williams team has argued that the steering column was intact until the moment of impact.

ANSA's unsourced report said public

prosecutor Maurizio Passarini had obtained leave from an examining judge, Diego Di Marco, to proceed with an indictment.

"Passarini... will draw up the indictment in the next few days. Then a date has to be fixed for the trial, which will take place before the local judge in Imola," the report said.

A manslaughter charge carries a maximum prison sentence of seven years in the event of conviction.

Di Marco and Williams' Italian lawyer were unavailable for comment. Passarini's office, contacted by telephone, would neither confirm nor deny the report.

"Mr Passarini has nothing to say on the matter," an official at the prosecutor's office said. "We have a duty not to comment."

ANSA said Di Marco had accepted recommendations by Passarini to drop proceedings against several other people investigated in his enquiry, a move that legally opened the way for the prosecutor to proceed with his indictment.

Senna died a day after Austrian Roland Ratzenberger, who drove for the Simtek team, was killed on the same Imola track in a 300 kph smash during final practice.

ANSA said Di Marco had accepted a recommendation from Passarini to drop proceedings against five people investigated in connection with Ratzenberger's death.

Bevilacqua to carry on despite IAAF action

ROME (R) — Italian high jumper Antonella Bevilacqua said on Tuesday she would carry on despite a decision by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) to uphold a ban for doping.

"I want to continue because athletics is a beautiful sport and I enjoy being a part of it," she said. Bevilacqua tested positive twice in May for the stimulant Ephedrine but an Italian federation (FIDAL) panel ruled she had taken the drug by accident and did not impose the statutory three-month ban which would have prevented her taking part in the Atlanta Olympic where she finished fourth.

IAAF spokesman Giorgio Reineri said on Tuesday the panel had decided the FIDAL decision was wrong and Bevilacqua should have been suspended for three months from May 26. "FIDAL misdirected itself by applying in this case the IOC (International Olympic Committee) medical code instead of the IAAF rules and procedural guidelines for doping control," Reineri said in a telephone interview.

"Miss Bevilacqua had under the IAAF rules the liability for the doping offence which has been shown to have taken place," Bevilacqua said she was surprised because she had expected to be cleared and hinted that she would take legal action, saying that she intended to keep her silence on the case to "allow the lawyers to speak" in her

place. The ban covered the period from May 26 to August 25 and Bevilacqua is free to compete again now.

"In Athens I will go above two metres," she said, referring to the next world championships in Greece.

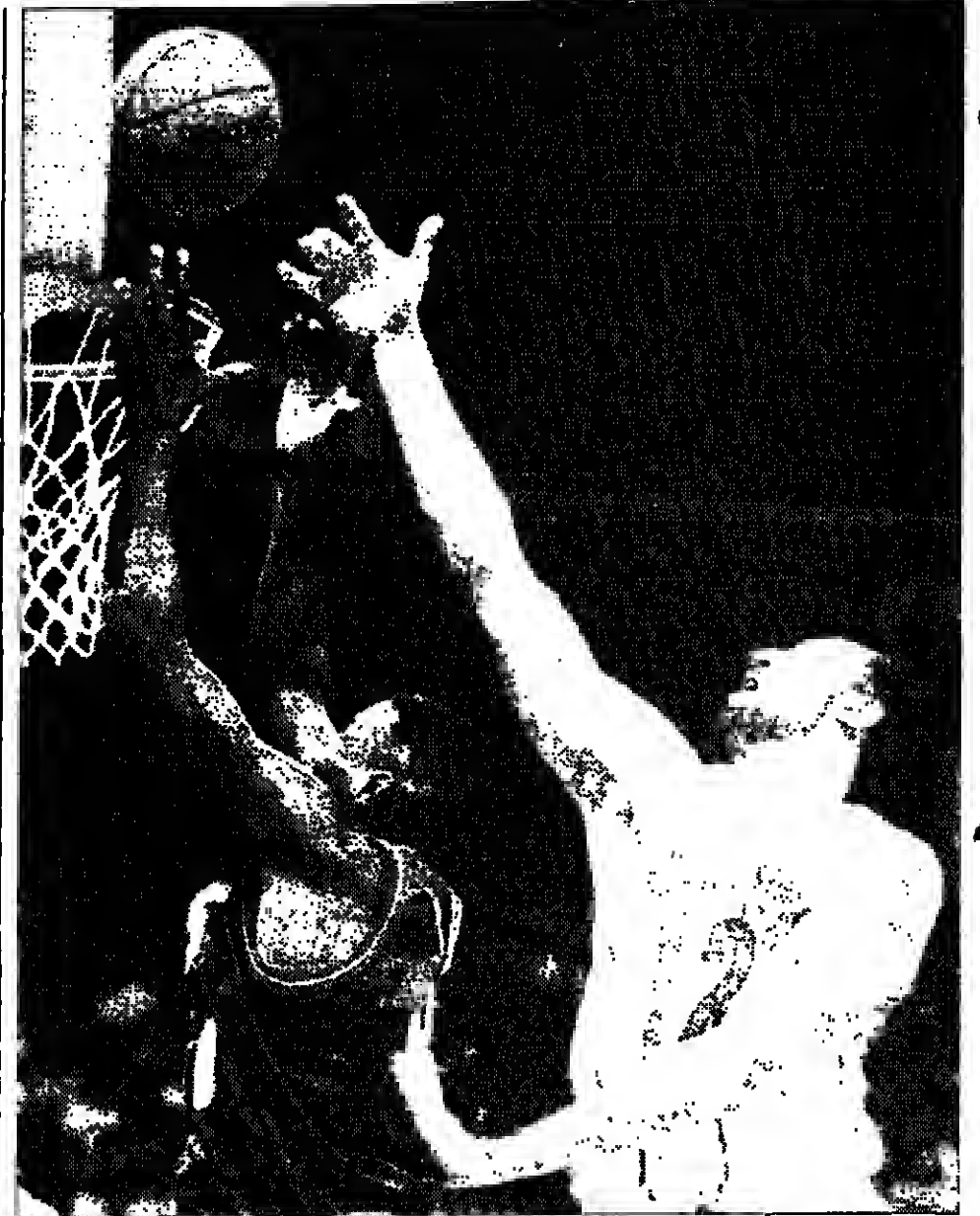
FIDAL said in a statement it was surprised and "deeply disappointed" by the IAAF decision. "FIDAL underlines with great surprise the fact that the commission appears not to have taken into account the official documentation which showed an obligation, on the part of all involved, to respect Article 5 of the IOC medical code," the statement said.

The Italian federation said that, aside from matters of principle and law, the "fundamental aspect of this case is the defence of the athlete, of her rights and performances."

It said that FIDAL reserved the right to take whatever measures necessary to look after the athlete and her reputation while awaiting further developments.

An Italian athletics source said earlier that the IAAF wanted to scrub Bevilacqua's result from the 1996 Olympics and added that FIDAL was likely to appeal to the IOC to prevent that from happening.

Although Bevilacqua missed a medal in Atlanta, the fourth place was her best ever result in a major competition and Italian officials have suggested that being stripped of the recognition could harm the athlete psychologically.



Charlotte Hornets center Vlade Divac (R) blocks the shot of Seattle Supersonics forward Shawn Kemp during first half NBA action in the Charlotte Coliseum (Reuters photo)

Olajuwon comes back with 27 points against Portland

Spurs, Suns lose again

HOUSTON (R) — Hakeem Olajuwon scored 27 points after missing three games with an irregular heartbeat, and Clyde Drexler's three-point play with 39 seconds left in overtime broke a tie to lead the Houston Rockets to a 102-101 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers Tuesday.

Houston has won seven straight games and improved to 7-1 at home. The Rockets are 13-1 and are tied with the Chicago Bulls for the NBA's best record.

Olajuwon made 9-of-21 shots from the field and played 41 minutes. He helped Houston outscore the Blazers, 46-28, in the paint.

"Everything is fine, I was not fatigued, just a little sluggish to start," said Olajuwon. In Toronto, Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf and Corliss Williamson combined for 21 points in the first quarter as the Sacramento Kings opened an 11-point lead and held on for a 98-87 victory over the Toronto Raptors, who lost their sixth straight game.

Abdul-Rauf scored 11 of his 18 points and Williamson added 10 of his 12 in the opening period, when Sacramento opened a 31-20 lead.

Raptors' starting rookie Marcus Camby collapsed in pre-game warmups and was taken to a hospital with, but he is expected to make a full recovery. "I had back spasms and I'll be out at least a week," Camby said.

In Atlanta, Christian Laettner scored 18 points to lead five players in double figures and Dikembe Mutombo had 14 as the Atlanta Hawks coasted to a 101-80 victory over the Vancouver Grizzlies.

Tyrone Corbin scored 17 points, Mookie Blaylock

15 and Eldridge Recasner 10 for Atlanta, which outscored Vancouver 37-19 in the first quarter and never looked back. Shaqeeb Abdur-Rahim scored 19 points, including 9-of-9 from the foul line for Vancouver.

In Charlotte, Anthony Mason had his first career triple-double, and Muggsy Bogues scored six of his 10 points in a third-quarter run as the Charlotte Hornets snapped the 11-game winning streak of the Seattle Supersonics, 97-89.

Mason finished with 14 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for Charlotte. Vlade Divac had 13 points and 13 rebounds for the Hornets.

In Dallas, Chris Gatling scored 10 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter as the Dallas Mavericks dealt the San Antonio Spurs their sixth straight loss, 105-101.

George McCloud scored 22 points and Jim Jackson had 21 for the Mavericks, who led by as many as nine points in the final period and snapped a two-game losing streak.

Dominique Wilkins scored 32 points for the Spurs.

In Denver, Dick Motta won his first game back as a coach, as Dale Ellis scored 28 points, and Brooks Thompson added a career-high 26 for the

Denver Nuggets, who knocked off the winless Phoenix Suns, 117-108.

Thompson, a second-year guard, signed last week after being released by the Utah Jazz, nailed 11 three-pointers, Tom Hammond added 19 points for Denver.

In Philadelphia, Shaquille O'Neal had 23 points and 20 rebounds and led a decisive fourth-quarter surge as the Los Angeles Lakers turned in a 100-88 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers.

Eddie Jones added 23 points for the Lakers, who overcame a 10-point half-time deficit and improved to 5-3 on the road.

"I thought we played an outstanding second half," Lakers coach Del Harris said. "I was worried at halftime. Philadelphia took a lot of momentum into their locker room."

At Golden State, Dan Majerle scored 23 points and Keith Askins keyed a decisive second-quarter run as the Miami Heat won their fifth straight game, defeating the Golden State Warriors 107-88.

Alonzo Mourning scored 22 points and Tim Hardaway added 17 for Miami.

Jae Smith scored 24 points, Chris Mullin 17 and Mark Price had 12 for Golden State.

RESULTS			
Sacramento	98	Toronto	87
Atlanta	101	Vancouver	80
Charlotte	97	Seattle	89
LA Lakers	100	Philadelphia	88
Houston	102	Portland	101 (OT)
Dallas	105	San Antonio	101
Denver	117	Phoenix	108
Miami	107	Golden State	88

Sydney moves ahead with Olympic preparations

SYDNEY (AFP) — Sydney's preparations to host the 2000 Olympics are moving up a gear, Olympic minister Michael Knight said Wednesday, following suggestions that the works are behind schedule.

"Now is the time for us to apply more of our energy, more of our effort, at getting the organisational plans for the conduct of the Games, the putting on of the event," Knight told parliament.

The minister, who is also president of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) was responding to suggestions in the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper that preparations were well behind schedule.

Knight told parliament that while the new South Wales state government and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) were more than pleased with progress on the Sydney Games, it was now time to pick up the pace.

The Sydney Morning Herald said Knight had been given the go-ahead to

Athens uses Internet to boost 2004 Games bid

ATHENS (AP) — Athens has moved its effort to host the 2004 Olympic Games to the Internet's World Wide Web.

"We wanted to provide people with direct information on our bid as well as information on how other cities are doing," Manolis Mavromatis, press director for the organizing committee, said on Tuesday.

The web site provides a summary of the bid file for the 2004 games, plus briefs on the history of the Olympic games — from their roots in ancient Greece to their revival here 100 years ago — the city of

recruit about 10 senior executives for socog positions that have remained vacant more than three years since Sydney won the bid.

Knight said outstanding senior positions would be filled by the end of March next year, but declined to give further details.

After a string of resigna-

tions and board reshuffles, the newspaper also raised questions about the future SOCOG chief executive Mal Hemmerling, who it said would not be involved in the selection of the executives.

However, Knight said Hemmerling had the board's full backing.

At the same time, information on facilities and infrastructure works in progress. Mavromatis said the site is one of five already put on the web by contending cities. Others include Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Lille, Seville, and Stockholm.

A total of 11 cities are bidding for the 2004 games. The others are Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro, San Juan, and St. Petersburg.

They will be pared down to four or five in March and the final decision will be announced in Los Angeles on Sept. 5.

50 players nominated for Golden Ball award

PARIS (R) — French soccer magazine France Football on Tuesday named 50 players from whom the 1996 European footballer of the year will be chosen.

Librarian striker George Weah of AC Milan last year became the first non-European to win the trophy after the rules were changed to extend the award to the best footballer playing in Europe, regardless of nationality.

Weah is among 20 players remaining from the first list of 50 chosen last year. Euro '96 had a strong impact, with 35 on the list having taken part in the European championship finals in England last June.

Germany have the highest number of nominees (8), followed by France (7). Italy have dropped from eight last year to five this year, although 18 of the 50 play in Italy. The Czech Republic, beaten by Germany in the European championship final, provide four players on the list compared with none last year.

Among the big names to disappear are Weah's predecessors Roberto Baggio of Italy and Hristo Stoichkov of Bulgaria.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAHAR HIRSHI
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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ			
Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:	1♠	Pass	1♠
1NT	Pass	2	Pass
What do you bid now?	Q. 4 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:		
AA 8 ♠AKQJ7 ♠AJ85 ♠A10	AKQJ5 ♠K89 ♠108542 ♠6		
The bidding has proceeded:			
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST			
2♣	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♣	Pass
What do you bid now?			
Q. 2 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:			
AAKJ783 ♠J92 ♠K8 ♠A64			
The bidding has proceeded:			
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST			
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
What do you bid now?			
Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:			
AK95 ♣3 ♠KJ8843 ♠AQ8			
The bidding has proceeded:			
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST			
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
What action do you take?			
Q. 5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:			
AK5 ♣Q1063 ♣Q7 ♠AK1000			
The bidding has proceeded:			
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST			
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
What action do you take?			
Q. 6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:			
AK5 ♣78 ♠10863 ♠AK9874			
Farmer opens the bidding with one no trump. What action do you take?			

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Sport

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By Tanya Habjou
Swiss in the Jordan Times

AMIAN — A man
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Flemish cyclist arrives in Jordan as part of world tour

By Tanya Hahjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A man, a vision, and a bicycle — how many great tales began this way?

Michel De Vos, a Flemish cyclist who has embarked on a world tour to seek culture and cycle some 100,000 kilometres over a four-year period is now cycling through Jordan.

De Vos told the Jordan Times Wednesday that he was not seeking fame nor the attention of the Guinness Book of World Records, but was on a personal journey for education of all the cultures of the world, and hopes to help developing countries inadvertently through his writings.

The idea came to him 10 years ago in Belgium, and it has taken almost a decade to animate his vision.

"I did not seek a sponsor. I wanted the freedom to travel as I pleased," he said.

After gathering enough money and a custom made bicycle built especially for his measurements, his first attempt almost put an end to his dream when he hit the road during July of 1995 and was nearly stoned to death while cycling through Iran.

"Everything was progressing nicely, and I found the Iranians to be extremely friendly. But while I was cycling in the south of Iran men jumped out of a truck, beat me, threw stones at my face, and stole my bags," he said, adding



Michel De Vos on his world-touring hike

that he would return to Iran to show that he held no grudge because of "a few cruel thieves."

After hospitalisation and a search for his bicycle by the Iranian authorities, De Vos finally began his journey again in 1996 on June 3rd and mounted his bag-laden bike to travel through the Baltics, the Ukraine, Eastern Europe, Greece, and has now made his way down to the Middle East.

While in Syria, he experienced his first problem obtaining a visa from the Saudi Arabian embassy, which delayed his journey at least nine days.

"When I travel I like to experience all aspects of the culture, and I stay with a range of people from farmers to diplomats, who have all been very kind," he said.

De Vos plans on travelling to Egypt today, and then on to Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Iran, and Pakistan on his way to the Far East.

"I always knew that I wanted to travel the five continents to learn about the different cultures and religions, and I never let anything distract me, not even marriage," he said.

Preparation for the journey included the study of languages, of which De Vos is fluent in Flemish, English, French, Spanish, and German.

He also taught sports for eight years, as well as worked with the Belgian Olympic Committee, the Belgian Sailing Federation, and the Flemish Sports Administration.

According to De Vos, when he completes his journey he will write a book, and will donate the proceeds to whatever country he finds to be the most needy.

Following this interview, De Vos then hopped his lanky form on his bicycle, and was off in a rush to accept a dinner invitation from a Jordanian family.

Kolyvanov sets seal on Bologna victory

BOLOGNA (R) — Russian striker Igor Kolyvanov gave Bologna a 2-1 victory on Tuesday as the home team saw off Second Division Cremonese 5-2 on aggregate to reach the Italian Cup semifinals.

The outcome of the match had always looked a foregone conclusion and only 3,500 spectators, including Italy coach Arrigo Sacchi, turned up on a bitterly cold night at Bologna's Renato Dall'Ara Stadium.

The sense of inevitability was reinforced almost immediately, when Giorgio Bresciani slotted home Bologna's first goal in the second minute.

Bresciani pounced on the rebound after goalkeeper Domenico Dardo parried a shot from Russian Igor Shalimov.

Cremonese equalised with a 26th minute penalty following a foul on the edge of the area on midfielder Riccardo Maspero, who easily converted the spot kick.

Kolyvanov then made it 2-1 on the night with a 76th minute penalty after Sweden's Kennet Andersson was brought down by a tackle from behind as he headed for goal.

Bologna, who play newly crowned World Club champions Juventus away in the league on Sunday, now play either Milan or the current league leaders Vicenza in the semi-final, played over two legs on January 29 and February 26.

Labour peace in baseball as owners ratify deal

CHICAGO (AP) — Baseball owners ended a bitter four-year fight with their players Tuesday, ratifying a new collective bargaining agreement that ensures play will continue without interruption.

The owners approved a deal that ushers in a new era in the game, allowing for play between the American and National Leagues and revenue sharing to help financially struggling teams.

Many teams wanted a stronger restraint on salaries, with some advocating a salary cap. But many teams had tired of the fight and realised that it would take another costly work stoppage to gain additional concessions.

"Baseball fans can finally look forward to five years of uninterrupted play," acting commissioner Bud Selig said. "We can now work together to bring peace to the game. This very difficult and painful process is now behind us."

Final approval from players could come next week, when the union's executive board meets at Dorado Beach, Puerto Rico.

The same proposal was voted down three weeks ago. But Philadelphia Phillies owner Bill Giles said that since then the clubs developed "the realisation that we couldn't change the deal."

Union head Donald Fehr and management negotiator Randy Levine must now draft a formal agreement to cover the outline they agreed to Oct. 24. Owners gave their 10-man executive council authority to approve the final draft without convening another owners' meeting.

When they voted in early November, owners demanded that the union make two major changes: eliminating the players' option to extend the agreement through the 2001 season and eliminating the provision restricting a luxury tax to a maximum of

five teams per season.

Fehr rejected making any major changes, leaving the owners essentially with a take-it-or-leave-it decision.

Under the proposal, up to five teams would pay a 35 percent tax on the amount of their payrolls over \$51 million next season and \$55 million in 1998. In 1999, they would pay a 34 percent tax on the amount over \$58.9 million, and in 2000 the tax would disappear.

The most revolutionary aspect would be the start of interleague play for the first time since professional major leagues formed in 1871. It would begin June 12, when the four NL West teams would play the four AL West teams, with the other divisions starting the next day.

Owners reopened the old contract on Dec. 7, 1992, but took until June 14, 1994 to present their salary cap plan. Players struck that Aug. 12 and the walkout lasted 232 days, wiping out the world series for the first time in 90 years.

The strike, baseball's eighth work stoppage since 1972, ended on March 31, 1995, when a U.S. District judge issued an injunction restoring the expired agreement, ruling owners illegally changed rules regarding free agency and salary arbitration.

Even President Clinton failed to resolve the dispute, expressing exasperation in February 1995, after he called both sides into the White House without being able to forge an agreement.

Fans responded with anger, cutting the average attendance from 31,612 per game in 1994 to 25,260 in 1995. It rebounded to 26,889 per cent last season to 26,889.

Wimbledon No. 1 court dug up

LONDON (R) — Work began Tuesday on digging up the turf of Wimbledon's No. 1 court in preparation for the demolition of the arena to make way for a new 11,500-capacity stadium.

But although the arena has reached the end of its life after 72 years, the grass will continue to play host to top-class tennis.

On Thursday it is due to be bundled up and taken by lorry to Eastbourne, where it will be laid on Devonshire Park International tennis centre's number one court.

A Wimbledon spokesman said: "We wanted the turf to remain in Britain and if it had been sold at auction, then it could have gone to a private bidder from abroad."

Christopher Gorrage, the All England Lawn Tennis Club's chief executive, added: "We are naturally pleased that this favourite surface will continue to make a lasting contribution to tennis in this country."

The 100,000 pounds (\$165,000) cost of buying and moving the turf, as well as the purchase of some seats and memorabilia from the court, is being met by the Lawn Tennis Association, an insurance company and the Eastbourne local council.

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INVITATION TO TWO TENDERS

Mu'tah University invites specialized companies to submit bids for the following two tenders:

- Tender No. L21/96: Supplying the University Library with foreign books and publications.
- Tender No. L42/96: Supplying the University Library with foreign periodicals.

Interested eligible bidders inside and outside Jordan can obtain the bidding documents at Mu'tah University Liaison Office on Samir Rifai Street - Jabal Amman, between the 3rd and the 4th Circles. Telephone 645295.

Bidders are requested to submit the following:

- A bid bond of JD 3000 for every tender.
- The price of each copy of the two tenders is J.D 25 (unrefundable).
- An original copy of the offer with two certified copies signed by the bidder.
- All copies should be enclosed in an envelop where it is written the name of the bidder and the number of the tender. This envelop should be placed in the Central Tender Committee box at the University in AL-Karak.

Closing date for the delivery of offers is Monday, four o'clock, December 23, 1996.

All offers that do not fulfil the conditions and requirements of the tender will not be considered.

INVITATION TO AN INTERNATIONAL TENDER

1. Mu'tah University invite specialized and experienced international companies to submit their bids to the tender for the integrated project "A Modern Computer Center at Mu'tah University" involving the supply, erection, start-up, technical assistance, maintenance and training to handle the equipment.

2. Bidders should submit a financial offer to the best terms and conditions available in their countries. This financial offer should be a loan for fully financing the integrated project and available at present to the Government of Jordan including the detailed financing conditions, such as:

- Low interest rate
- grace period
- semi, annual reimbursement.

3. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and collect the Bidding Documents at the Liaison Office of Mu'tah University located on Samir Rifai St.-Jabal Amman between 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Saturday through Thursday beginning November 26, 1996 to December 14, 1996.

4. Bidders may offer more updated versions of the specific components and equipment called for.

5. Prices are to be quoted on the basis CIF Mu'tah University excluding custom duties and other official taxes And charges, but including 12 month on site warranty and installation.

6. Specifications should be according to specifications stated in the project document which will be handed to the bidders.

7. The offer will be evaluated technically and financially according to our specification and requirement. Contract will be awarded to the best evaluated bidders who would prove capable to carry out the requirements of the contract to be signed.

8. A complete set of the Bidding Document may be obtained from above reference office upon submission of a written application and a payment of a non-refundable fee. All payments will be made by a bank draft or certified bank check in the currency of the purchaser's choice or in cash made out in favour of Mu'tah University. The price of purchasing the documents would be the equivalent in Jordanian Dinors or US\$ currency of the following amounts:

- * For delivery to personal callers \$ 400,000 per bid document.
- * For delivery by local mail to local Bidders by courier Service \$ 450,000 per bid document.
- * For delivery to Overseas Bidders by courier Service \$ 550,000 for bid document.

Closing date for the bid submission will be noon at 11 o'clock, on Jan 14 1997. Bids shall have a validity of 90 days.

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SCORPIONS IN BEIRUT: Members of international hard rock band the Scorpions are escorted by Lebanese police into Beirut's newly-opened Hard Rock Cafe for a news conference shortly after their arrival in the Lebanese capital on Wednesday. The legendary five-member German band will perform live in Beirut this weekend in its first concert ever in the Middle East (Reuters photo)

House elects panels after lengthy debate over composition

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special To The Jordan Times

AMMAN — After extensive consultations between the government and the Lower House of Parliament on Wednesday, deputies agreed, without the customary acrimonious debate, on the final make-up of the House's 14 various committees.

At the beginning of the session, deputies seemed determined not to withdraw from three main committees: judiciary, finance and public freedoms. The number of deputies in each committee exceeded 20 while the House bylaws allow for 11 members only. After the one-hour break, Speaker Sa'ad Havel Srour announced that the different parliamentary blocs came to an agreement on the final composition of these committees.

At the outset, deputies were mainly competing over three main committees: the Law Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Freedoms Committee.

Leftist Deputy Toujan

Faisal contended that deputies who are also ministers should withdraw from those committees since they will have the right anyway to attend and participate in their proceedings. Centrist Deputy and former Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh also expressed reservation that ministers should be over-represented in the committee.

After the one-hour consultations, a large number of ministers withdrew from the respective committees. Four out of seven withdrew from the Finance Committee, two out of five from the Law Committee and four out of six from the Freedoms Committee. No deputy from the opposition parties withdrew their nomination.

The final composition of all committees is as follows: The administrative committee: Mifteh Lawzi (Amman-centrist), Abdul Min'am Abu Zant (Amman-Islamist), Theil Anis (Zarqa-Islamist), Ibrahim Samara (Ramtha-centrist), Khaled Abdul Nabli (Amman-centrist).

Suleiman Sa'ad (Jerash-Islamist), Taha Hababeh (Tafleh-centrist), Bader Riati (Aqaba-Islamist), and Jamil Hshoush (Karak-centrist).

The National Guidance Committee: Hammam Sa'ed (Amman-Islamist), Abdul Rahim Ekour (Irbid-Islamist), Mohammad Haj (Zarqa-Islamist), Deifallah Momeni (Ajloun-Islamist), Taha Hababeh (Tafleh-centrist), Theil Abdullah (Amman-centrist), Ibrahim Samara (Ramtha-centrist), Hamzeh Mansour (Amman-Islamist), and Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh (Ramtha-centrist).

The Health and Environment Committee: Mohammad Ziben (Amman-centrist), Aref Bataineh (Irbid-minister), Mohammad Abu Eleim (Mafrqa-centrist), Munir Sobar (Amman-minister), Mustafa Sheikhat (Balqa-minister), Hani Hijazin (Karak-centrist), Ahmad Qudah (Ajloun-minister), Abdul Hafez Shakhaneh (Madaba-minister), Nazeeh

(Continued on page 7)

Ten given life terms to two years in Bayat Al Imam case

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The State Security Court on Wednesday sentenced 10 people to jail terms ranging from life imprisonment to two years for attempted sabotage and lese majeste.

The military tribunal cleared three men who, the prosecution charged, belonged to the same group known as Bayat Al Imam, from all charges because of lack of evidence.

Seven of the 13 were charged by the prosecution with plotting to carry out extremist attacks and illegal possession and manufacturing of explosives with illicit intent and slander against His Majesty King Hussein.

The remaining six were charged with distributing pamphlets that were slanderous to the King. The military tribunal declared two men innocent of sabotage and possession of explosives and amended the illicit intent charges to possession of explosives against four of the five defendants. It also cleared two defendants accused of slandering the King.

The four indicted and sentenced to hard labour prison terms were: Issam Mohammad Taher

Mohammad, 35, (15 years), Ahmad Fudeil Khaleleh, 28, (15 years), Khalid Mustafa Arouri, 27, (10 years), and Suleiman Taleb Thamrah, 27, (15 years).

The fifth defendant, Mustafa Hussein Musa Suleiman, 22, was convicted of possessing and manufacturing explosives with illicit intent and was first sentenced to death.

But the court decided to commute the death sentence to life imprisonment with hard labour "because he is young and deserves a better chance and because he caused no deaths," Judge Youssef Faouri said in the 39-page verdict.

Upon hearing the verdict, the first defendant, Issam Mohammad Taher, the alleged leader of the group, shouted: "If you think your verdict will frighten and dissuade us from continuing our mission, you are mistaken because this will only make us stronger."

In an interview with Al Wasat magazine in August 1996, Maqdesi said he knew the four men who were involved in a November 1995 bombing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which killed five Americans and two Indians.

The four men had told interrogators before they were beheaded in March that they were influenced by the philosophies of various Islamic militant leaders, including Maqdesi.

Following Wednesday's verdict, court-appointed attorneys defending the group told the Jordan Times that they were not appealing the sentences because they were satisfied with the ruling.

"We were expecting a tougher punishment. The court's decision was merciful and fair, and we are not appealing the verdict," one of the lawyers said.

The tribunal, which apart from Judge Faouri includes Aref Syouf and Salem Saoudi, said it relied on the defendants' own confessions to prosecutors which "was found similar to the evidence presented by the prosecution in court."

Judge Faouri said that the court also relied on testimonies of explosive experts and police officers. In their testimonies, defendants claimed they were detained by the security forces for more than six months during which they were subjected to psychological and physical torture before being handed over to

(Continued on page 7)

Shahor: Security behind violations of self-rule accords

AMMAN (J.T.) — The

Israeli army's coordinator in the occupied territories, Major-General Oren Shahor, has admitted that Israel had violated some clauses of the Oslo agreement, but said most of the violations stemmed from security considerations, an Israeli newspaper published Wednesday.

In a meeting with the Knesset foreign affairs and defence committee, General Shahor presented a list of Israeli violations as presented by the Palestinians, the Jerusalem Post said.

The general said most of them were a question of "different interpretation" of the agreement. Last week the committee discussed the Palestinian violations.

The most obvious — and undisputed — Israeli violations are the failure to carry out the redeployment in Hebron scheduled for last March, and the first of three planned further redeployments in the territories that had been scheduled for September.

According to an official briefing, the list of 34 violations, later distributed to reporters, was based on a report presented by Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat in September.

Gen. Shahor rejected many of the claims on security grounds, including the Palestinian charge that they have not been given all the authority they were meant to have in areas in the West Bank and Gaza where Israel has overriding security responsibility.

He similarly rejected a complaint about Israel not having allocated certain routes for the use of the Palestinian police, and that the joint patrols have not been expanded in other areas.

He also dismissed a complaint that Israel had overstepped its bounds at the Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, saying this stemmed from security needs.

He said some of the Palestinian complaints were unsubstantiated, including a charge that Israel has not granted the Palestinians air space or that Israel has imposed a blockade off the Gaza coast. Gen. Shahor said there was no blockade, although the area in which fishing boats are allowed has been reduced.

There is also a disagreement about the charges of Israeli violations at the as yet non-operational airport in Gaza. The Palestinians are demanding overall responsibility there, while Israel claims that it has the same status as other crossings, with ultimate Israeli responsibility, the Post said.

Israeli minister threatens to annex West Bank and Gaza

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — An Israeli minister warned Wednesday that his country could annex the West Bank and Gaza Strip if Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat seeks recognition for an independent state.

"Such a step on the part of Mr. Arafat would mean an outright annulment of the Oslo (autonomy) accords," Communication Minister Limor Livnat, a member of the ruling Likud bloc, told Israeli radio.

"In this case, I would ask the government to retaliate by taking our own unilateral measures affecting the Palestinians. I would call for the extension of Israeli sovereignty over (West Bank) and Gaza," she said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also issued a stern warning to Palestinian leaders on Friday against reported plans by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to seek U.N. recognition of Palestinian demands for independence.

"A one-sided announcement by the Palestinian (National) Authority (PNA) on the establishment of a state is a breach of agreements and a serious mistake on its part," Mr. Netanyahu said.

But Mr. Arafat himself said last week that an independent Palestinian state would be declared "in two years, at the end of the interim period."

This was a reference to the

1993 Oslo interim accords on autonomy under which Israel and the Palestinians are due to complete negotiations on a permanent settlement and status for the territories by May 1999.

Mr. Netanyahu has ruled out permitting the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state with full military and diplomatic powers. His right-wing government aims instead to propose a broad form of autonomy.

The PLO symbolically declared an independent state in November 1988. The state has been recognised by more than 100 countries.

France said Wednesday it was very concerned over comments by Mr. Netanyahu pledging to ensure Jewish towns on the West Bank will grow and prosper "forever."

"The encouragement this gives to the development of settlements in the Palestinian territories appears counter to the interim autonomy accord," signed in Washington in September 1995, said the Foreign Ministry.

"Such a policy, if it is confirmed, would risk creating new sources of tension and new blocking factors," said spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt following Mr. Netanyahu's comments Tuesday.

Mr. Netanyahu told Jewish settlers in the West Bank settlement or Ariel that "ariel must expand, it needs more schools, swimming pools,

houses, couples."

Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government in June lifted a freeze on settlement expansion imposed by the previous government and has since approved plans for building thousands of homes in the West Bank.

"French authorities are convinced that peace and security in the Middle East cannot be forged without respecting the accords already reached," Mr. Rummelhardt continued.

"I want to believe that the Israeli government, which has said it is ready to press ahead with the peace process, will stick to their commitments," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu is to meet President Jacques Chirac on Monday during the organisation for security and cooperation in Europe (OSCE) summit in Lisbon.

The United States has also criticised the Israeli premier's comments, calling them "not useful and not constructive."

A senior U.S. official commented on the visit Mr. Netanyahu made to Ariel, the settlements "a very complicating factor" in the peace process.

The visit, he added, was "not useful." "It's not constructive," the senior U.S. official said.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said the U.N. General Assembly will soon discuss a resolution concerning Israel's settlement policy in the Palestinian territories.

Arafat and Jewish settlers discuss coexistence in Bethlehem meeting

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — A group of Jewish settlers met with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in the autonomous city of Bethlehem to discuss coexistence, Israeli participants and Palestinian officials said Wednesday.

The Tuesday night meeting came as Palestinian and Israeli negotiators struggled to reach an agreement that would allow Israel to carry out its long-delayed pull-back in the West Bank town of Hebron, home to some 450 Jewish settlers and 130,000 Palestinians.

The question of how to prevent friction between the two communities, which include some of the most militant Jews and Palestinians in the West Bank, has been the focus of much of the two months of negotiations.

An official close to Mr. Arafat speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed the meeting took place. The official said the Palestinians were "not enthusiastic" about the contact and refused to give details of the meeting.

Jewish settlers from Hebron and the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba were among the group of 12 who met with Mr. Arafat late Tuesday night, said David Bedein of the West Bank settlement of Efrat who participated in the meeting.

Mr. Arafat shook everyone's hand and served orange juice and coffee during the 90-minute meeting that Mr. Bedein described as "cordial and businesslike."

"There was no antagonism, but it was not a love fest," said Mr. Bedein.

Mr. Bedein said the settlers requested the meeting with Mr. Arafat after Palestinian merchants put off business deals with Israelis pending approval from the Palestinian leader.

Mr. Arafat appointed a liaison between Jewish businessmen and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to act as a go-between for such contacts including use of a Palestinian bus company for an Israeli tour of the town of Hebron, Mr. Bedein said.

Yehuda Waxman, an Israeli who was also present at the meeting, said the group also "discussed ways

of coexistence between the Jews and the Arabs in area" with Mr. Arafat.

"We asked whether Arafat was going to finally make speeches in Arabic in which he promotes coexistence with Israel," Mr. Bedein said. "He nodded his head and said I do so all the time."

Mr. Waxman, whose son Nachshon was kidnapped by militants two years ago and killed during a rescue attempt by Israeli commandos, also proposed that Mr. Arafat participate in a centre for tolerance he established in his son's name.

The Council of Jewish Settlers, which represents many of the 140,000 settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said it opposed meeting with Mr. Arafat since the Palestinian leader calls for dismantling all settlements.

Tsurie Popovich, spokesman for Kiryat Arba where 6,000 settlers live, criticised the meeting.

"We didn't approve of the prime minister meeting Arafat, so we're certainly not going to approve of our own residents meeting him," Mr. Popovich said.

Sharaa confirms Israel agreed in February to leave Golan

LONDON (AP) — Confirming details of a comprehensive peace agreement with Israel for the first time, Syria's foreign minister said Tuesday that backtracking by the current Israeli government could torpedo the whole process.

Israel and Syria agreed last February to a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights and had planned security arrangements, bringing the parties closer than they ever had been to peace, Farouk Al Sharaa told reporters.

Syria is demanding a return to that status quo before restarting talks with Israel, now led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has said he is not bound by his more dovish predecessors' unsigned agreements with Damascus.

That could "ignite all the old hostilities, hatred," Mr. Sharaa said, accusing Israel of using "other means, other than negotiations" to try and force Syria's hands.

"The Israeli side has to accept the commitments and the undertakings that were reached during the last five years of negotiations," he said.

That contradicted the tone expressed by Mr. Netanyahu who Tuesday said he was confident Israel and Syria would make significant progress in peace talks during his four-year term in office.

"I think that we will ... achieve in the next four years a breakthrough with Syria," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu and his predecessor, Shimon Peres, have indicated that Israel agreed to a full withdrawal from the Golan when talks with Syria were suspended last February.

Mr. Netanyahu has said he wants to restart negotiations, but will not countenance a full withdrawal from the Golan.

Syria has always demanded an Israeli commitment to a full withdrawal from the Heights as a precondition for peace talks.

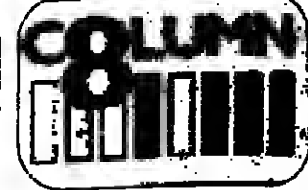
Mr. Sharaa's press conference was the first time a Syrian confirmed the report, and gave some details.

"It was agreed by both sides with (the) acknowledgment and the participation of the United States as a major co-sponsor that in any peace agreement Israel should withdraw fully from the Golan to the 4th of June, 1967 lines," he said.

That done, Syria was willing to conduct more substantive talks, and reach agreement with Israel on security arrangements.

Mr. Sharaa would not say what these were, but the assassinated Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, had suggested a withdrawal of Syrian forces to 20 kilometres from the Heights, and the presence of international peacekeepers on the Heights.

"It is recorded, thousands of pages of minutes of meetings, messages, letters, signed, etc.," the Syrian foreign minister said. There was no signed agreement, he said, because both sides preferred to wait until a final peace was negotiated before signing.



Curb the urge to shop — group

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (R) — Fed up with over-the-top commercialisation of Christmas?

Here's a novel way to mark the beginning of the holiday shopping season: for just one day, buy absolutely nothing. "Buy Nothing Day," organised by a loose coalition of international groups, will be held on Nov. 29, the day after America's Thanksgiving and the unofficial start of the Christmas and Chanukah gift-buying rush. It is usually one of the busiest shopping days of the year. "The concept is a 24-hour moratorium on consumer spending," said Kalle Lasn, director of the Vancouver-based Media Foundation, one of the event's backers.

Buy Nothing Day's organisers hope more than 100,000 people in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Britain, South Africa, Japan, Sweden and Belgium will fight off the urge to buy. Started by a Canadian group five years ago, the day aims to draw attention to overconsumption and its environmental and social consequences.

The United States has also criticised the Israeli premier's comments, calling them "not useful and not constructive."

A senior U.S. official commented on the visit Mr. Netanyahu made to Ariel, the settlements "a very complicating factor" in the peace process.

The visit, he added, was "not useful." "It's not constructive," the senior U.S. official said.

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